

POLITICAL CRISES IN SOUTH ASIA: PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA AND NEPAL

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 1, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND SOUTH ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:18 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gary L. Ackerman (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The subcommittee will come to order.

A person would have to live on a desert island not to know that all is not well in South Asia, and not well is putting it mildly.

The current political crises in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal have created the potential for multiple failed states in the region. It was a failed state that gave us September 11. Failed states are breeding grounds for terrorists and safe havens for terrorist activities, and failed states are precisely what we cannot have.

So the declaration by Francis Townsend, one of President Bush's top advisers in the war on terror, that as a consequence of Pakistan's failure to secure its border region with Afghanistan, the United States would have to consider using military force inside Pakistan if it identified key al-Qaeda targets, was a stunning admission that the policy of largesse toward Pakistan pursued by the administration for the last 5 years had failed.

After billions in military and economic aid, billions more in so-called coalition support funds, hundreds of millions in debt relief and the sale of sophisticated weapons, including F-16s, we are at precisely the same point where we were immediately prior to September 11.

But don't take my word for it. According to the director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, who I quote:

"Al-Qaeda has been able to regain some of its momentum. The leadership's intact. They have operational planners, and they have safe haven."

For the last 5 years, I have been warning that despite our assistance, Pakistan was not making a complete effort to combat terrorism, that President General Musharraf had made a strategic decision to have it both ways, that he would cooperate with us on al-

Qaeda but turn a blind eye when it came to Pakistan's former and apparently current friends, the Taliban.

For years, I have advocated tying our military assistance to Pakistan to more effective and complete cooperation in the fight on terrorism, so I am gratified that the House has finally adopted that position last week as part of H.R. 1, which the President is expected to sign into law.

But terrorism isn't the only place where Pakistani efforts and administration policy have been less than fully effective. The return to a democratic government has been too long delayed, and the prospect of elections this year should remind us all how deeply flawed the 2002 elections were.

We cannot tolerate a repetition of the process that marginalized the moderate and secular political parties, flawed as they may be, and produced Islamist majorities in the Northwest Frontier Province, a share of power for them in Balochistan and the biggest Islamic electoral victories on the national level in Pakistan's brief history.

The restoration of the chief justice earlier this month shows that the rule of law is still honored in Pakistan, if mainly in the breach. President General Musharraf should step down as army chief of staff at the end of the year when his authority to hold both positions expires, and he should stand for election as President after free and fair elections have produced a new national assembly.

There are dangers in elections to be sure and no guarantee the outcome will be entirely to our liking, but a Government of Pakistan that is a result of free and fair elections will have greater legitimacy with its own people to pursue the fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

In Bangladesh, we have a caretaker government backed by the army that has delayed elections until sometime next year and has instead arrested one former prime minister and is threatening to arrest another and has imprisoned hundreds, if not thousands, of politicians and business leaders on vague charges of corruption. While I believe that neither of the two major parties in Bangladesh have brought any great good to the Bangladeshi people, I am hard-pressed to understand how an extra constitutional process brings about political reform.

From where I sit, this looks remarkably like what Musharraf did in Pakistan: Clear the field of mainstream parties and inadvertently open the door to Islamist parties, some of whom have particularly odious associations with known terrorists and terrorist organizations. The administration has previously described Bangladesh as a moderate Muslim democratic state. After the caretaker government gets done, however, describing Bangladesh as moderate and democratic will certainly strain credulity.

The 2002 ceasefire in Sri Lanka exists only on paper as both the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have resumed a full-scale conflict, resulting in over 4,000 dead, hundreds of thousands displaced and massive human rights violations committed by both sides. In particular, the Government of Sri Lanka seems intent on winning the conflict militarily and has resorted to alliances with pro-government Tamil militias, extrajudicial killings and disappearances of political opponents.

Hundreds of Sri Lankans have been detained under newly strengthened emergency regulations. The expansion of emergency powers, the widespread use of extrajudicial killings and the disappearances by government and the free reign given by the government to the Sinhalese nationalists only accelerates Sri Lanka's descent into chaos and drift away from democracy.

While Nepal has previously represented a bright spot in an otherwise dismal South Asian political scene, the delay of elections for a constituent assembly until November, the threat of Maoist withdrawal from the interim government, the uncertain commitment to a peaceful resolution to the insurgency and ethnic unrest in the Terai region all pushed Nepal further from the restoration of democracy. These delays provide a dangerous opportunity for the king and his supporters to reassert the monarchy in ways that can only be described as counterproductive.

Five months ago at our hearing on South Asia, I noted that the lesson of September 11 is that we cannot afford to allow any state to succumb to any individual or combination of transnational threats, that even if the smallest and most remote of states fails, it poses a threat to us and our allies. Five months later, events in the four nations we are discussing today have gotten worse, and the possibility of failure looms ever larger.

With that, I would like to recognize my good friend from Indiana, the ranking member, Mr. Pence.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ackerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GARY L. ACKERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

The subcommittee will come to order. A person would have to live on a deserted island not to know that all is not well in South Asia and not well is putting it mildly. The current political crises in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal have created the potential for multiple failed states in the region. It was a failed state that gave us September 11. Failed states are breeding grounds for terrorists and safe-havens for terrorist activities and failed states are precisely what we cannot have.

So the declaration by Francis Townsend, one of President Bush's top advisors in the war on terror, that as a consequence of Pakistan's failure to secure its border region with Afghanistan, the United States would have to consider using military force inside Pakistan if it identified key Al-Qaeda targets there, was a stunning admission that the policy of largesse toward Pakistan pursued by the Administration for the last 5 years had failed. After Billions in military and economic aid, billions more in so-called "coalition support funds," hundreds of millions in debt relief and the sale of sophisticated weapons including F-16s we are at precisely the same point we were immediately prior to September 11. But don't take my word for it. According to director of national intelligence Mike McConnell, "Al Qaeda has been able to regain some of its momentum. The leadership's intact. They have operational planners, and they have safe haven."

For the last five years I have been warning that despite our assistance, Pakistan was not making a complete effort to combat terrorism; that President/General Musharraf had made a strategic decision to have it both ways; that he would cooperate with us on al Qaeda, but turn a blind eye when it came to Pakistan's former, and apparently current, friends the Taliban. For years, I have advocated tying our military assistance to Pakistan, to more effective and complete cooperation in the fight against terrorism. So I am gratified that the House has finally adopted that position last week as part of H.R. 1 which the President is expected to sign into law.

But terrorism isn't the only place where Pakistani efforts, and Administration policy, have been less than fully effective. The return to a democratic government has been too long delayed and the prospect of elections this year should remind us all just how deeply flawed the 2002 elections were. We cannot tolerate a repetition of

the process that marginalized the moderate and secular political parties—flawed as they may be—and produced Islamist majorities in the Northwest Frontier Province, a share of power for them in Balochistan and the biggest Islamist electoral victories on the national level in Pakistan's brief history.

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In Bangladesh, a care-taker government backed by the Army has delayed elections until sometime next year and has instead arrested one former Prime Minister, is threatening to arrest another and has imprisoned hundreds if not thousands of politicians and business leaders on vague charges of corruption. While I believe that neither of the two major parties in Bangladesh have brought any great good to the Bangladeshi people, I'm hard pressed to understand how an extra-constitutional process brings about political reform. From where I sit this looks remarkably like what Musharraf did in Pakistan—clear the field of the mainstream parties and inadvertently open the door to the Islamist parties, some of whom have particularly odious associations with known terrorists and terrorist organizations. The Administration has previously described Bangladesh as a moderate Muslim democratic state. After the care-taker government gets done however, describing Bangladesh as moderate and democratic will strain credulity.

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Five months ago, at our hearing on South Asia, I noted that the lesson of September 11 is that we cannot afford to allow any state to succumb to any individual or combination of transnational threats—that even if the smallest and most remote of states fails, it poses a threat to us and our allies. Five months later, events in the four nations we are discussing today have gotten worse and the possibility of failure looms even larger.

Now, I'd like to recognize my friend from Indiana, the Ranking Member, Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for calling this important hearing. I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses.

Today's hearing covers the political crises in South Asia, specifically the countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Some of these countries are often overlooked, but our witnesses today will make clear their truly vital importance to American national interests.

Mr. Chairman, the country of Pakistan has to be considered first among equals in this discussion. There are fewer countries whose success has greater implications for our efforts in the war on terror than Pakistan.

Secretary Gastright will tell us that Pakistan's contribution to our efforts against al-Qaeda and the Taliban have been, and I quote, "invaluable." I second that and hope we will not lose sight of that contribution in our various debates and discussions in the greater body.

We can and have taken issue with some of President Pervez Musharraf's tactics, but he is a crucial ally and we must assist his efforts against terrorists. I second the Secretary's testimony that it is a credit to President Musharraf that he is abiding by the unfavorable ruling ordering him to reinstate the Supreme Court justice he dismissed. It is a good sign that President Musharraf says he seeks harmonious ties with the chief justice.

I also encourage Pakistan to continue its reforms toward democratization and free elections sometime within the year. The fact that President Musharraf met recently with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto as a possible running mate shows his willingness to engage in the democratic process, and it represents a genuinely hopeful sign for true political progress in Pakistan.

I share Secretary Gastright's testimony that the agreements with tribal groups, the so-called ceasefire with the Taliban, were "poorly implemented and enforced and failed to produce the results sought by the Pakistan Government." Clearly this is a region of the world of great concern. That Pakistan has 100,000 troops in this area speaks to its priority for its government as well.

Lost in some of the controversy over the unclassified excerpts released in the National Intelligence Estimate last month is that the administration has a new plan for the FATA, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, that may yield fruit. I hope our witnesses will discuss that.

I had the privilege of traveling to Pakistan just shortly less than 2 years ago. While we did not make it into Waziristan, we traveled from Islamabad up into the border regions and visited Peshar. There we had dinner with eight tribal leaders who had traveled 2 days on horseback from South Waziristan to meet with us.

Then, as before, I couldn't help but feel that we were dealing with people who while they live in very ancient circumstances, Mr. Chairman, they have very modern thoughts and are I think much more susceptible to the right kinds of inducements and encouragement than we have seen productive in our policies to date. I am looking to the discussion in that regard.

Our interest in Pakistan could not be more crucial to our success in the war on terror. The other countries present various challenges as well. The terrorist Tamil Tigers have tried to destroy Sri Lanka for a quarter of a century, the Maoist terrorists in Nepal who commit crimes of impunity according to Secretary Mann, and perhaps the world's worst corruption found in Bangladesh. Additionally, our witnesses will tell of child soldiers and abductions and a host of other problems. I look forward to hearing their recommendations on these vexing issues.

Again, Mr. Chairman, the jurisdiction of this subcommittee takes in much more volatile parts of the world. I want to commend you personally for focusing the attention of this subcommittee on the balance of our jurisdiction, which in sum I believe bears an equal weight in our success in the war on terror and in our global effec-

tiveness in the region. I commend you for that, and I thank you for calling the hearing.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. Chabot?

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this important hearing. Just a brief comment on Pakistan first.

One of our colleagues in the Senate just yesterday I believe, Barack Obama, voiced his frustration with the progress that has been made by President Musharraf and his forces against al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. I think many of us share his frustration.

I do believe that President Musharraf should have been much more active and much more persistent in going after al-Qaeda in general and Osama bin Laden in particular. However, like my colleague here, having met with President Musharraf several times both here in the United States and in Islamabad a while back, I do believe that we have to be careful.

He has a balancing act. Let us face it. If he goes too far, he is at risk of the stability of the government, and if that government should fall and extremists, for example, would take over, this is a country that we don't suspect has nuclear weapons. They have nuclear weapons obviously. To think of the extremist elements in that country getting their hands on nuclear weapons is just an unthinkable dilemma that the world would face.

And so we have to make sure that we don't do anything that might push that country in that direction, although I again, along with my colleague, Mr. Pence from Indiana, do believe that free and fair elections should take place in that country sooner rather than later.

In place of an opening statement, if I might read here a letter that I, along with my colleague, Mark Kirk, sent to the caretaker government 1 week ago today to the head of the government, the chief advisor, Dr. Ahmed?

"We write to express our support for the ongoing efforts of the caretaker government to institute the economic, political and social reforms needed to assist Bangladesh in becoming a prosperous democratic government in the 21st century. However, we also write to express our concern with recent reports indicating that the national elections which were originally scheduled for January 22, 2007, have been postponed yet again until the end of 2008."

And I understand that there is talk about perhaps that even being moved back to 2009.

"Equally disconcerting are the same reports that describe efforts by the caretaker government to arrest and detain more than 250,000 Bangladeshi citizens with no respect for due process or the civil rights of its citizens.

"As you know, this past May, several Members of the U.S. House of Representatives met with your Special Envoy in Washington, DC, to discuss United States support for Bangladesh. During our discussion, we pledged support for trade measures such as the Tariff Relief Assistance for Developing Economies Act that will provide Bangladeshi exporting indus-

tries with greater economic stability through stronger trade relations with the United States. At the same time, we expressed our hope that free and fair national elections would be held as soon as reasonably possible and our desire to see the caretaker government recognize and respect the rights of its citizens even as it pursued initiatives to end corruption and fraud.

“The continuing news reports describing the caretaker government’s unwillingness to provide specific benchmarks that will lead to national elections and the continued accounts of human rights violations are alarming. The optimism felt for a country moving toward democracy has been replaced with concern that military rule will govern. Indeed, the need to delay the January 22, 2007, elections was a necessary course of action to ensure that a fair and just election is administered. However, it has been more than 7 months since the caretaker government was installed, and the constraints placed on civil rights have not been eased. The same citizens and international community that supported your efforts in January deserve a clear roadmap that will provide them stability and certainty for the future.

“We wholeheartedly agree that corruption has no place in politics, the electoral process or in government. Building a corruption-free electoral process is critical to the future of Bangladesh, yet the success of a democracy also rests in the ability of its people to enjoy civil and political rights unhindered, including the freedom to associate with and participate in the political party of one’s choosing without fear of repercussion. Unfortunately, the recent high-profile arrests of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia, together with the arrest and the 17-month detainment of Shoaib Choudhury . . .”

who I happened to meet with in the Capitol Building just a couple hours ago,

“only gives credence to the speculation that the caretaker government’s anticorruption campaign is politically motivated and contrary to international human rights and due process practices. During this turbulent time, it is important that each and every citizen, regardless of social and political party affiliation, be able to expect that the rights and civil liberties provided by Bangladeshi law, including due process, will be followed in each and every case. The success of a democracy rests in the ability of its people and the press to rely on the Constitution and laws which they supported and operate in an open and independent process, one in which views can be expressed without fear of intimidation.”

I am almost finished.

“We urge you to publish as soon as possible a timeline describing the process to be administered over the next several months that will result in elections before the end of 2008, including a compilation of a voter list. In addition, we urge you to restore the fundamental rights of all Bangladeshi citizens, including the right to due process under the law. We remain

committed to supporting the caretaker government and its reform efforts. However, the political and civil rights of the Bangladeshi citizens must not be compromised in the name of reform.”

The letter is signed by myself and Congressman Mark Kirk, and I would ask that the letter be entered into the record, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Without objection.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

[The information referred to follows:]

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2007

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed
Chief Adviser of the Caretaker Government
Dhaka
People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dear Dr. Ahmed:

We write to express our support for the ongoing efforts of the caretaker government to institute the economic, political, and social reforms needed to assist Bangladesh in becoming a prosperous, democratic government in the 21st century. However, we also write to express our concern with recent reports indicating that the national elections, which were originally scheduled for January 22, 2007, have been postponed, yet again, until the end of 2008. Equally disconcerting are the same reports that describe efforts by the caretaker government to arrest and detain more than 250,000 Bangladeshi citizens without respect for due process or the civil rights of its citizens.

As you know, this past May, several Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, met with your Special Envoy, Farooq Sobhan, in Washington D.C. to discuss United States support for Bangladesh. During our discussion, we pledged support for trade measures such as the Tariff Relief Assistance for Developing Economies Act that will provide Bangladeshi exporting industries with greater economic stability through stronger trade relations with the United States. At the same time, we expressed our hope that free and fair national elections would be held as soon as reasonably possible, and our desire to see the caretaker government recognize and respect the rights of its citizens, even as it pursues initiatives to end corruption and fraud.

The continuing news reports describing the caretaker government's unwillingness to provide specific benchmarks that will lead to national elections and the continued accounts of human rights violations are alarming. The optimism felt for a country moving toward democracy has been replaced with concern that military rule will govern. Indeed, the need to delay the January 22, 2007 elections was a necessary course of action to ensure that a fair and just election is administered. However, it has been more than seven months since the caretaker government was installed and the constraints placed on civil rights have not been eased. The same citizens and international community that supported your efforts in January deserve a clear roadmap that will provide them stability and certainty for the future.

We wholeheartedly agree that corruption has no place in politics, the electoral process, or in government. Building a corruption-free electoral process is critical to the future of Bangladesh. Yet, the success of a democracy also rests in the ability of its people to enjoy civil and political rights unhindered, including the freedom to associate with and participate in the political party of one's choosing without fear of repercussion. Unfortunately, the recent high profile arrests of former Prime Ministers Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia, together with the arrest and the 17 month detainment of Shoaib Choudhury only gives credence to the speculation that the caretaker government's anti-corruption campaign is politically motivated and contrary to international human rights and due process practices. During this turbulent time, it is important that each and every citizen, regardless of social and political party affiliation, be able to expect that the rights and civil liberties provided by Bangladeshi law, including due process, will be followed in each and every case. The success of a democracy rests in the ability of its people and the press to rely on the Constitution and laws, which they supported, and operate in an open and independent process, one in which views can be expressed without fear of intimidation.

We urge you to publish, as soon as possible, a timeline describing the process to be administered over the next several months that will result in elections before the end of 2008, including the compilation of a voter list. In addition, we urge you to restore the fundamental rights of all Bangladeshi citizens, including the right to due process under the law. We remain committed to supporting the caretaker government and its reform efforts. However, the political and civil rights of the Bangladeshi citizens must not be compromised in the name of reform.

Sincerely,


Steve Chabot
Member of Congress


Mark Kirk
Member of Congress

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Before I proceed with our witnesses today, I just want to point out that we are pleased to have with us today as observers and part of our audience six members of the State Great Hural, which is the national legislature of Mongolia. We welcome our international colleagues here under the auspices of our House Democracy Assistance Commission. They are led by Mr. Damiran. If you would stand so we could acknowledge you?

[Applause.]

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you for joining us.

Our second panel consists of Ambassador Steven R. Mann, which has now become our first panel because our first panel has not shown up yet. Ambassador Mann is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. Ambassador Mann has served in that position since May of last year.

For the last several years, Ambassador Mann has been heavily involved in the Caspian energy issues, working on both the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline as well as the Caspian Pipeline Consortium. He has also played an active role in mediating some of the thorniest Eurasian conflicts.

Ambassador Mann joined the Foreign Service in 1976 and served as the Ambassador to Turkmenistan, Deputy Chief of Mission in Sri Lanka and at various other postings in Washington and abroad over the last 30 years.

Mr. John A. Gastright is Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs and has served in that post since March 2005, focusing primarily on Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Gastright served in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs as Acting Coordinator for Afghanistan and as a Special Assistant to former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

Before joining the State Department, Mr. Gastright served as chief of staff to Congressman Jack Kingston and as military assistant to Senator Strom Thurmond. Prior to his service on the Hill, Mr. Gastright spent 6 years as a naval officer.

We welcome both of you, and without objection, your written statements will be made part of the permanent record. You may proceed as you wish, starting with Ambassador Mann. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE STEVEN R. MANN, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador MANN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Members of the committee, for inviting me here today to discuss developments in Nepal and Sri Lanka. These are two South Asian nations which have great promise, but each are struggling with domestic insurgencies that in Nepal's case will require a period of recovery and national reconciliation and in Sri Lanka's case still threaten the country's institutions and people.

Let me first deal briefly with Nepal. The recent history in Nepal is nothing short of remarkable. Its citizens have endured much, but there is a real hope for a brighter future. Nepal has seen a decade-long insurgency end as the Maoists agreed last November to enter into the political process.

It has gone through severe political upheaval over the years, and in April 2006, the country witnessed a popular movement that ended the direct rule of King Gyanendra and replaced him with Prime Minister Koirala, who is serving in that position for the fifth time.

At the moment, Nepal is in a decisive phase in its history in the run-up to constituent assembly elections on November 22. While there is progress, as you have noted, Mr. Chairman, serious concerns remain. We are hopeful that the November 22 elections will be conducted in a free and fair manner, yet we know there are many difficulties in that run-up.

I would like to flag here the serious law and order issues which could affect the election and which must be addressed by the government of Prime Minister Koirala. We remain concerned that the Maoists and their young communist league will continue their campaign of intimidation, abduction and extortion and seek to disrupt the election or unfairly influence its outcome. The Maoists commit crime with impunity, they devalue justice in Nepal, and they threaten the integrity of the election process.

Mr. Chairman, the key elements of our policy in Nepal are to use every means at our disposal to promote free and fair elections, to work with the Government of Nepal and other interested governments, to push the Maoists away from arms struggle and into peaceful participation in the political process as well as to promote inclusion more widely in the Nepali political process.

If I can turn briefly to Sri Lanka, this longstanding conflict, the fragile peace process, the deteriorating human rights conditions continue to cause concern for the United States. The conflict between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has entered a phase of intensified fighting during President Rajapaksa's administration.

The fighting has been steady. We have seen this in the east as the government force has attempted to retake areas held by the Tigers, and on July 11 of this year, the Sri Lankan military announced that it had taken Thoppigala, the last remaining Tiger stronghold in the east. But the costs of war have taken a heavy toll certainly on the economy, as in other areas. Inflation stands at 20 percent, and tourism, so important for Sri Lanka, has plummeted by 40–60 percent over the past year.

The Tamil Tigers we have seen have demonstrated little interest in a peaceful settlement. They have not renounced their stated goal of an independent homeland, and mine attacks and political assassinations attributed to Tigers in the past months further signal their intention to continue the conflict.

The Tigers insist that the Government of Sri Lanka abide by the terms of the 2002 ceasefire agreement as a condition for talks. We believe the government is unlikely to agree to these terms because it would, among other things, require giving back the east to Tiger control.

Our top policy priorities for Sri Lanka remain restoration of good governance and respect for human rights, leading to an eventual negotiated settlement. We believe that finalizing a credible devolution of power proposal, together with ending human rights violations and improving government accountability, are essential steps toward a lasting peace.

Mr. Chairman, overall we are deeply committed to achieving lasting peace and stability in Nepal, Sri Lanka and the South Asian region. We will continue to work together with our friends and allies through international fora such as the co-chairs group in Sri Lanka and through the extensive outreach of our Embassies in Kathmandu and Colombo to help the Nepalese and Sri Lankan people overcome the considerable obstacles before them on the path to peace and prosperity.

A final note, Mr. Chairman, if I could on our diplomatic and consular operations. I would just like to stress that our personnel deployed throughout the field are America's front line of national security, and I can assure you in terms of our operations that every dollar that Congress provides for our diplomats in the field and at home here in the Department is warmly appreciated and effectively used.

I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you and stand ready to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mann follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE STEVEN R. MANN, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

POLITICAL CRISES IN SOUTH ASIA: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NEPAL AND SRI LANKA

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss recent developments in Nepal and Sri Lanka. These two South Asian nations are both struggling with domestic insurgencies that in Nepal's case, will require a period of recovery and national reconciliation, and in Sri Lanka's case, still threaten the country's institutions and people. Let me first turn to Nepal.

Nepal's recent history is nothing short of remarkable. Its citizens have endured much, but have hope for a brighter future. Nepal has seen a decade-long insurgency end as the Maoists agreed in November 2006 to enter into the political process. It has experienced political upheaval as a palace massacre claimed the lives of the king and several members of the royal family. In April 2006, the country witnessed a popular movement that ended the direct rule of King Gyanendra and replaced him with Prime Minister Koirala, who is serving in that capacity for the fifth time.

Today, Nepal is entering a decisive phase in its history as it prepares for Constituent Assembly elections on November 22. While there is progress, serious concerns remain. We are optimistic that the November 22 elections will be conducted in a free and fair manner. At the same time, we are fully cognizant that Nepal faces difficult challenges in the run-up to the election.

If I may start on a positive note, we are impressed by the work of the members of Nepal's Election Commission to date. They are aware of the importance of conducting a free and fair election on schedule and they are working diligently with the international community. The Election Commission has registered over 17.6 million voters, representing 58 political parties.

The Commission has welcomed and encouraged volunteers and representatives of non-government organizations, including the Carter Center, to monitor the election. The Election Commission is preparing to issue a Code of Conduct, outlining election rules and behavior. The Code will clarify the right of parties to campaign and have access to the media and places a ceiling on campaign expenditures and restrictions on polling of voters, all of which could unfairly influence the outcome of the elections.

Serious law and order issues could affect the election and need to be addressed by the government of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. We remain concerned that the Maoists and their Young Communist League will continue their campaign of intimidation, abduction, and extortion and seek to disrupt the election or unfairly influence its outcome. The local press reports Maoist atrocities virtually every day. The Maoists commit crimes with impunity, devalue justice in Nepal, and threaten the integrity of the election process. As such, they clearly continue to warrant designation as a Specially-Designated Global Terrorist organization.

Due to improvement in the human rights situation since the April 27th declaration of a cease-fire between the government and the Maoists, there has been a substantial decrease in abuses by the Government. We continue to urge the Government to address past abuses and to appoint new members to the National Human Rights Commission. We welcome recent progress in this regard.

Regional tensions, increasing demands by traditionally-marginalized groups for representation, and the emergence of ethnically-based political factions and splinter groups—particularly in the Terai—have complicated the political landscape.

We are concerned by recent violence in the Terai, the low lying area of Nepal bordering India, where approximately half of the Nepali people reside, because it has the potential to derail the election process and it undermines law and order and stability. Aside from the criminal activity of the Maoists, which continues nationwide, the greatest obstacle to a peaceful and successful election is ethnic tension in the Terai.

The situation is complex because the Maoists are politically active in the Terai, but their interests often conflict with those of Terai inhabitants, most of whom are Madhesi, a distinct ethnic group with its own language whose culture is, in many ways, closer to that of India. It is in the Maoists' interest to blame the violence in the Terai on Madhesi groups despite Maoist involvement. The Maoists and Young Communist League have assumed great influence in the western Terai through threats and intimidation. In the eastern Terai, the Maoists are in open conflict with Madhesi groups, who are using this transition period to assert their rights and, in some cases, to call for regional autonomy.

During the past year, a number of political groups with radical agendas, some of them armed, have emerged in the Terai. These groups' agendas vary. Some groups

seek to continue the armed struggle that the Maoists claim to have given up, others are promoting an ethnic-based agenda. Other established groups have split into factions dominated by politically ambitious individuals. In some areas, groups have splintered from the Maoists and become their military or political rivals.

As the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon reported on July 18:

“The security situation in the Terai has remained extremely disturbed and efforts to improve law and order in the region have been halting at best. Frequent clashes continue to occur between Maoists and Madhesi activists in the Terai as they compete for political space.”

The Nepal Government’s Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction is reaching out to these emerging groups to start a dialogue and to draw them into the election process. This is an essential process that the government needs to expand.

A successful, free and fair Constituent Assembly election would represent a significant step forward toward establishing a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Nepal. Reaching out to the Terai groups and bringing them into the democratic fold will greatly improve prospects for success. It is clear that the Government of Nepal will have to make new and sustained efforts to fulfill the promise of the peace process.

We believe that seven of the political parties in the Parliamentary Alliance are committed to peaceful, multi-party pluralism. The Maoists are the exception. The seven parties may disagree at times, have competing agendas, and fail to consult with each other, but they are committed to working within the Parliamentary system.

Like ambitious political parties worldwide, they want to succeed and to expand their political base. Representatives of Terai districts and areas where the Maoists are active have been not been able to visit their constituencies regularly. In some cases, they fear for their safety if they return.

As described by the UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in a report in June, 2007:

“The Young Communist League’s violent disruption of activities of opposing groups, at times with other parties of the Seven Party Alliance (SPA), must not be tolerated. Such actions close the political space for dialogue and risk contributing to a spiral of violence. They are contrary to the principles of freedom of opinion, assembly and association and run contrary to conditions conducive for free and fair elections.”

Under the current Eight Party Alliance, the Maoists have more power than they are likely to achieve through the ballot box. Although their leaders have promised to curb violence, to date we have not seen any lasting drop in criminal activity by the Maoists or their Young Communist League affiliates. Their commitments to abide by the law and to respect their agreements have proven hollow. Maoist leader Mr. Pushpa Dahal has stated publicly that the Maoists have no intention of joining the political mainstream and their actions, to date, have consistently proved that statement accurate.

Mr. Chairman, the key elements of United States policy in Nepal are to use every means at our disposal to promote free and fair elections, to work with the Government of Nepal and other interested governments to push the Maoists away from armed struggle and peaceful participants in the political process, and to promote the increased participation of the Madhesi into Nepali political life.

In addition, we have a keen interest in providing humanitarian assistance to Nepal. In 2006 the United States spent roughly \$32.6 million dollars on assistance to Nepal, most of it going to health-related programs, focusing primarily on women and children. Other assistance programs included law enforcement training, programs that bolster civil society, rule of law and respect for human rights in the government and military, and stabilization operations. In doing so, we continue to work with a variety of partners, both within Nepal and in the international community.

Turning to Sri Lanka:

Sri Lanka’s long-standing ethnic conflict, fragile peace process, and deteriorating human rights conditions continue to cause concern for the United States and the international community. The conflict between the Sri Lankan Government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam entered a phase of intensified fighting during President Rajapaksa’s administration. In recent months, fighting has been steady in the Tamil Tiger-controlled East as Government forces attempted to re-take areas held by the Tigers under the terms of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement. On July 11, 2007, the Sri Lankan military announced it had taken Thoppigala, the last remaining Tamil Tiger stronghold in the East, bringing the entire Eastern Province under government control. The costs of war have taken a heavy toll on the economy: inflation

currently stands at 20% and tourism—one of Sri Lanka's main industries—has plummeted by 40–60% since last year.

Fighting continues in the North and there is a continued Tiger presence in the East. Just five days after the government announced it was in control of the East, suspected Tiger gunmen shot and killed a senior provincial administrator. The Tigers remain a considerable fighting force and are capable of launching attacks across the island. On July 25, the Tigers detonated a claymore mine in the North, killing 11 soldiers and wounding eight others.

Furthermore, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are regarded as one of the world's best funded guerrilla groups, with an estimate reported \$200 to \$300 million in annual revenues. Ample funding allows them to purchase weapons, to operate a maritime force—the Sea Tigers, and to maintain a small air capability. Tiger aircraft attacked military facilities co-located with Colombo's international airport, as well as fuel installations outside Colombo in April 2007. The Tigers have publicly expressed their intention to continue attacking military, government and economic targets. The Tigers do not target U.S. citizens or assets. Rather, they limit their attacks to Sri Lankan security forces, political figures, civilians, and businesses. Their innovations such as explosive vests and waterborne suicide attacks have been copied by other terrorist groups.

The Tamil Tigers have demonstrated little interest in a peaceful settlement. They have not renounced their stated goal of an independent homeland. Claymore mine attacks and political assassinations attributed to the Tigers in the past months further signal their intention to continue the conflict. The Tigers are insisting the Government of Sri Lanka abide by the terms of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement as a condition for talks. The Sri Lankan Government is unlikely to agree to these terms, however, as it would require ceding the East back to Tiger control.

Prospects for peace are currently focused on an effort by the President's party, the major opposition parties, and other parties to finalize a proposal which would reform the constitution to create a system devolving certain powers to Tamil and other minority areas. The peace process in Sri Lanka has collapsed repeatedly in part due to a lack of political consensus over how to satisfy the rights and aspirations of the majority Sinhala and minority Tamil populations. It is critical that the country's political leadership engage fully and in good faith in the current debate over devolution of power and place the best interests of the country ahead of partisan politics. I must flag the fact that the Tamil Tigers share the responsibility for the negotiation impasse. It is important to note as well that although the Tigers are a party to the negotiations, they cannot be considered to be the representatives of all Sri Lankan Tamils.

Our top policy priorities for Sri Lanka remain restoration of good governance and respect for human rights leading to an eventual negotiated settlement. We believe that finalizing a credible devolution of power proposal, together with ending human rights violations and improving government accountability, are essential steps towards a lasting peace. The Government of Sri Lanka must do more to provide security and equitable treatment for its citizens, including taking seriously the plight of internally displaced persons, creating the conditions to allow economic opportunities to return across the island, and ensuring fair treatment at the hands of the police and security forces. These issues cannot be stably resolved through military means alone.

We are supporting the pursuit of a political settlement in Sri Lanka in several ways.

As a member of the Co-Chairs of the Tokyo Donors Conference, the United States participates along with the European Union, Japan, and Norway in the only international mechanism solely dedicated to peace in Sri Lanka. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A. Boucher led the U.S. delegation at the Co-Chairs most recent meeting in June in Oslo. The Co-Chairs discussed ways forward for the peace process as well as current challenges on the ground in Sri Lanka, including deteriorating human rights conditions and difficulties with humanitarian access. The Co-Chairs continue to pursue openings to return both sides to negotiations. After the Oslo meeting, the Norwegian Ambassador in Colombo was permitted to travel north to meet with Tiger leadership for the first time in six months.

We are also working towards peace in Sri Lanka through consistent senior-level bilateral engagement and high-level visits, in which we deliver to the Government of Sri Lanka a consistent message that the only lasting solution to this conflict is through negotiation. Assistant Secretary Boucher visited Colombo and Jaffna in May 2007 and delivered a tough message to all parties on the need for dialogue, a serious devolution of power proposal, equality among all Sri Lankans, and respect for human rights. Assistant Secretary Boucher stressed that a credible power-shar-

ing proposal that addresses legitimate Tamil grievances and preserves a political, social, and economic role for the Tamil and other communities in a post-conflict Sri Lanka could help re-energize the peace process and begin the process of national reconciliation.

In addition, we support peace efforts in Sri Lanka through U.S. Agency for International Development projects promoting dialogue between ethnic communities, developing citizenship skills, and improving governance. Our programs are focused on laying a foundation for peace in many ways, including providing technical assistance to develop a political framework to resolve the ethnic conflict, targeting corruption, training local government officials in management and budgeting, building the capacity of human rights institutions, and stimulating economic development. We are also interested in supporting programs that work with judges and bar associations and provide training for human rights groups to help provide legal aid to citizens in the North and East.

The United States is committed to help foster a lasting peace in Sri Lanka and to improve human rights conditions for all Sri Lankans. Ultimately, however, it is the Sri Lankan Government's responsibility to the Sri Lankan people to provide the conditions of safety and security that will lead to a more peaceful and prosperous future. Reaching consensus on a devolution proposal is a critical first step towards peace, but it is a domestic political issue in which the United States should not take sides. The United States' interest is in keeping the political process on devolution moving forward, rather than prescribing particular solutions to the Sri Lankans. We therefore continue to see no role for a Special Envoy to Sri Lanka at this time. We have, moreover, a highly capable envoy already on the job—his name is Robert Blake and he is our U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka.

The only lasting and stable solution to this conflict will be one that is reached through negotiations. Our military assistance does not support efforts to expand the conflict. Our modest assistance focuses on improving maritime capabilities such as weapons interdiction and surveillance. We support Sri Lanka's efforts to defend itself against terrorism and have demonstrated our commitment over the last year by arresting 15 individuals in the United States and Guam on material support charges, including an alleged leader of the Tamil Tigers in the United States who was arrested in April 2007. We refuse to allow the Tamil Tigers and their supporters to use the United States as a source of supply for weapons, technology, and financial resources.

Another key U.S. policy concern in Sri Lanka is the deterioration in human rights conditions. As the State Department's most recent Country Report on Human Rights practices indicated, human rights conditions across Sri Lanka have deteriorated significantly in the past year. We are deeply concerned by continuing reports of disappearances, abductions, torture, and the rise in extrajudicial killings, with eight extra-judicial killings reported over a three day period in July on the Jaffna peninsula. Human rights conditions are worst in Tiger-controlled areas, where there is no rule of law to protect Sri Lankans' civil liberties. The Tigers' recruitment of child soldiers is singularly deplorable.

The intimidation of civil society through such incidents as the April 29 killing of Tamil journalist Selvarajah Rajivarman and the July 23 murder of Mariyanayagam Aloysius, a Tamil employee of the Danish Refugee Council, is an additional area of concern. We are encouraging the Government of Sri Lanka to improve its accountability and rein in the paramilitaries that reportedly operate openly in government-controlled Tamil areas and have been accused of serious human rights abuses, including the recruitment of child soldiers. We are also working with the government to improve human rights conditions through the human rights Commission of Inquiry and the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons. Our representative to the Group, former Department of State Assistant Secretary Arthur E. "Gene" Dewey was in Sri Lanka in July 2007, and will return in mid-August for the Group's next plenary meeting. While it is important that the Government investigate abuses, our message has consistently stressed the need for the Government to improve accountability writ large—this means not limiting its response to investigations that could take years, but taking immediate measures to hold the security forces accountable for order and discipline.

We are also engaged fully in humanitarian relief efforts to address the critical needs of Sri Lanka's more than 500,000 internally displaced persons. To date, in Fiscal Year 2007 alone, the United States has given \$10.6 million in humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka. This includes funding for Save the Children and UN Children's Fund programs providing protection, emergency relief supplies, nutrition, water, and sanitation and hygiene services. It also includes World Food Program funding for emergency food assistance, as well as International Committee of the Red Cross funding for emergency relief such as health services and shelter. In addi-

tion, the U.S. also supports the efforts of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees through regional funding.

Mr. Chairman, we are deeply committed to achieving lasting peace and stability in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the South Asia region. We will continue to work on the ground in that region with our friends and allies, through international fora such as the Co-Chairs group in Sri Lanka, and through the extensive outreach programs of our Embassies in Kathmandu and Colombo, to help the Nepalese and Sri Lankan people overcome the considerable obstacles before them on their path to peace and prosperity.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. I would be pleased to answer your questions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF MR. JOHN A. GASTRIGHT, JR., DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee. It is obviously important that you have this hearing, and I agree with you that this is the right opportunity to discuss these important matters.

I will discuss Pakistan and Bangladesh today. With 300 million people in these two predominantly Muslim countries, it is absolutely essential that we work together on an agenda to promote regional stability while building the foundations of sustainable democracy.

As you pointed out, lots of words have been spoken about Pakistan in recent days, but here is the bottom line. Pakistan is an indispensable ally in the global war on terrorism. Pakistan has captured or killed more al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorists than any other country in the world.

Moreover, a stable, prosperous and democratic Pakistan is the key to stability and prosperity in the entire region, and it plays a critical part in all of our policy goals for the region. Our interests in Pakistan are immediate as well as long-term and strategic, and we need to have a long-term, strategic partnership between the United States and Pakistan because that helps us address our immediate security needs.

Now this year, as you described, we look forward to Pakistan's successful transition to a democratically elected civilian government. We are working with the Government and the people of Pakistan to achieve this goal.

We also know that a thriving democracy requires a free press, a right to assembly, a fair and impartial criminal justice system, a vibrant civil society, broadly participative and responsive political parties and institutions, in other words, the foundations of sustainable democracy. We have done some good work in this area in the past several years with our Pakistani partners, and I look forward to discussing that with you today.

The vast majority of Pakistanis are concerned about extremism. The Government of Pakistan has recently increased the pressure on militants and extremists such as the storming of the Red Mosque in Islamabad recently. Unfortunately, the extremists have reacted with retaliatory bombings in the tribal regions and in Islamabad, killing more than 200 Pakistanis since July 12. At this moment, the Pakistani army is redeploying thousands of additional

troops to the border area and strengthening border posts and controls.

As Mr. Pence alluded to, in the federally administered tribal areas, the government is implementing a comprehensive, sustainable development strategy to combat terrorists and extremists, and by integrating these ungoverned spaces into the mainstream of Pakistan's economy and government, the goal is to render these areas permanently inhospitable to terrorists and violent extremism.

Now moving on to Bangladesh, this administration and the international community at large do not characterize the current caretaker government as a military government. First, the government is composed of civilians and led by a civilian, and second, it was established under a constitutional construct. However, it is obviously a country in transition.

Mr. Chabot takes personal interest in Bangladesh, who is the last Member of Congress to visit in Bangladesh, and we take his concerns very seriously on this matter. The caretaker government has outlined the roadmap for elections in 2008 that you and Mr. Kirk have called for, and that roadmap includes a new computerized voter list and a reformed election law, and perhaps even more significantly, the political parties that have long been a roadblock to democracy themselves are considering the internal reforms that provide an opportunity for fresh leadership and new ideas that would benefit the Bangladeshi people.

At the same time, the caretaker government is leading an unprecedented anticorruption campaign that has had some notable successes like separating the lower courts from the executive branch and streamlining the operations of Bangladesh's largest port. These are long overdue reforms that we have been urging the government to take for years. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have noted that the caretaker government has carried out more reforms than previous governments have enacted in the last 10 years.

We are carefully monitoring the campaigns and the actions of the caretaker government, and we are seizing every opportunity to urge the caretaker both privately and publicly to respect due process, to ensure that international standards of human rights are upheld, and we have been saying both publicly and privately that Bangladesh must hold free, fair, transparent and fully participatory elections as promised or this opportunity to advance the interests of the Bangladeshi people will be lost.

Mr. Chairman, as you know well, this is a dynamic part of the world, and much is happening. Again, I want to thank you for holding this important hearing and look forward to answering your questions. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gastright follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. JOHN A. GASTRIGHT, JR., DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Pakistan

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Committee. As you know, Mr. Chairman, Pakistan plays a key role in some of our most critical foreign policy goals, such as eliminating terrorism and violent extremism as a threat

to our security, and creating a regional environment inhospitable to terrorism and other forms of violent extremism. Pakistan is also critical to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Without Pakistani support and cooperation, we would face severe difficulties in supplying, reinforcing, and protecting our Coalition Forces deployed in neighboring Afghanistan to defend the democratically elected Afghan government. Most of the logistical support for those forces in Afghanistan passes through Pakistan. Pakistan also is key to our strategy of linking the landlocked, energy-laden nations of Central Asia to the dynamic markets of South Asia.

A stable, prosperous, democratic Pakistan is key to the stability and prosperity of the entire region and plays a critical part in all our policy goals for the area. A successful transformation of Pakistan—politically, economically, and democratically—would bring the benefits of prosperity, good governance, and justice to 160 million Pakistani people. This in turn would help to reverse the inroads made by violent extremism and help Pakistan to move toward modernity and moderation, eventually becoming a model in the Muslim world. Our interests in Pakistan are immediate as well as long-term and strategic; we will be working together to address the issues and concerns in this region for many years to come. Therefore, one of our most important objectives is to forge a long-term strategic partnership between the United States and Pakistan that is strong, multi-dimensional, and enduring. But at the same time we must address our immediate security concerns emanating from that country. Our assistance will help the Pakistani people to enjoy the benefits of security, prosperity, democracy, and good governance as well as improve governance in the least governed and most vulnerable areas of Pakistan.

The remainder of 2007 presents challenges and opportunities to accomplish fundamental tasks essential to achieving our long-term goals in Pakistan. This year will help determine whether Pakistan makes a successful transition to a democratically elected, civilian government, and we intend to assist President Musharraf to fulfill his commitment to this goal. We believe that Pakistan must transition to civilian democracy and we are backing the Pakistani government's efforts to make that transition. Civilian democratic rule will allow the Pakistani military to focus on its primary job of providing security for the people of Pakistan and ensuring that Pakistan fulfills its international obligations to combat terrorism and violent extremism. I believe we have a good plan in place to work with Pakistan on all of these fronts. The challenge is to maintain the right balance and implement the plan quickly and effectively.

The upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections will be critical benchmarks in determining Pakistan's progress toward full democracy. To help Pakistan transition to a sustainable democracy, we are helping strengthen the accountability and transparency of Pakistan's democratic and civic institutions. The U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department are working with international partners to provide the necessary tools for a democratic parliamentary election in Pakistan later this year. We are helping to create new computerized electoral rolls to help ensure that all Pakistani citizens eligible to vote will be able to, provide over 300,000 transparent ballot boxes, and display the new voter lists at 45,000 centers nationwide.

Additionally we are working with the Asia Foundation and others to train 60,000 polling staff and other officials, provide 175,000 voter screens to ensure voter privacy, train local media on providing election press coverage, and build voter awareness. We have focused on funding nongovernmental organizations that encourage women to participate in Pakistan's electoral process with a particular focus on the FATA and the Northwest Frontier Province. Finally, we are working to ensure that the election is adequately monitored by independent observers. But we also know that a thriving democracy requires more than just holding elections. Democracy requires a free press, the right to free assembly, a fair and impartial criminal justice system, a vibrant civil society, and broadly participative and responsive political parties and institutions. We are working to strengthen those important aspects of democracy as well.

The July 20 judgment issued by Pakistan's Supreme Court that reinstated Chief Justice Chaudhry is an index of the independence of Pakistan's judicial system. The President submitted the issue to the judicial branch and promised to abide by its judgment, and despite the unfavorable ruling, did precisely that. The Chief Justice having been reinstated by the Court, the matter was resolved in accordance with the Pakistani constitution and both President Musharraf and Prime Minister Aziz accepted the Supreme Court's decision. We think this outcome demonstrates to the world that the democratic institutions of Pakistan are able to function in accordance with the rule of law and be honored by all participants.

Most moderate Pakistanis are concerned about the growing threat of extremism and violence. Last month, the Pakistani government moved decisively against ex-

tremists in Islamabad's Red Mosque after Mosque leaders spurned opportunities to peacefully resolve the standoff. At the same time, the Government of Pakistan is increasing pressure on the militants and extremists in certain areas of Pakistan. Extremists reacted with retaliatory bombings in the tribal regions and in Islamabad, killing more than 200 Pakistanis and wounding many others. Most of the casualties have been Pakistani security forces, many of whom were moving into positions in the tribal areas. Islamabad has also borne the brunt of this retaliation, suffering a suicide bombing at a political rally that killed 12, and a suicide bombing at a market that killed 18 people. This week Pakistani security forces conducted another raid on extremists in North Waziristan, killing some 10 to 12 militants in the operation, according to initial press reports.

The Government has meanwhile expanded its political efforts in the Tribal Areas by working to boost the capacity and will of local tribes to resist and expel violent extremists in their midst, achieving successes in a few cases such as the expulsion of the al Qaeda-affiliated Uzbeks by tribal forces in and around South Waziristan. At this moment, the Pakistan Army is redeploying thousands of additional troops to the border area and strengthening border posts and controls. Since January, Pakistani forces have helped kill or capture major Taliban figures such as Obeidullah.

In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Afghan-Pakistani border regions, the government is implementing a comprehensive, sustainable development strategy to combat terrorists and extremists and remove them from their hideouts by integrating these ungoverned spaces into the mainstream of Pakistan's economy and government. The goal is to render these areas permanently inhospitable to terrorism and violent extremism.

Of course, we are under no illusions about the difficulties the Government of Pakistan will face in extending its writ to these previously ungoverned territories.

The Tribal Areas, for example, have the worst social indicators in all of Pakistan, such as a 3 percent female literacy rate. We also are clear about the level of commitment required to prevent Al Qaeda and the Taliban from continuing to exploit their border hideouts as a safehaven in Pakistan. In a \$2 billion, ten-year sustainable development plan, the Government of Pakistan is committed to improving living conditions, expanding governance, and improving security in the Tribal Areas, and we are asking for \$750 million over five years to assist Pakistan in this crucial endeavor. By boosting security and governance as well as political and economic development, the people of the border region will have a real opportunity to embrace peace and prosperity, while those preaching violence and extremism will be left in the cold.

President Bush has announced his intention to work with Congress to create Reconstruction Opportunity Zones which would further expand cooperation and official ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan. These zones will be a critical part of our broader counterterrorism strategy in those areas, designed to connect isolated regions to the global economy and create vital employment opportunities in territories prone to extremism. The zones will encourage investment and economic development by granting duty-free entry to the United States for certain goods produced in the zones, and create employment alternatives for the working-age population who may otherwise be drawn into terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and other illicit activities. This initiative includes input from across the spectrum of U.S. government agencies—State, Commerce, U.S. Trade Representative, Treasury, Defense, Agriculture, Labor, Homeland Security, and others. We hope Congress will pass the legislation necessary to create this trade preference program soon so that we can utilize this important economic tool in our fight against terrorism.

Our partnership with the Pakistanis gives us an opportunity to support Pakistan's own efforts to become a modern, open, prosperous, democratic state, and a moderate voice in the Islamic world. That is the vision for Pakistan that President Musharraf has articulated and demonstrated by reiterating his resolve to stop talibanization on the frontier and in urban areas, such as the Red Mosque compound. It is strongly in the U.S. national interest that Pakistan succeeds in realizing this vision.

There has been a lot of discussion about whether Pakistan can and should "do more" against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Islamabad faces immense challenges on this front, but Pakistan's contribution has been invaluable. Since 2001, the Pakistani Government has arrested hundreds of terrorist suspects, turning over to the U.S. such senior Al Qaeda figures as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Ramzi bin al Shibh, and Abu Zubaida. Pakistan is an indispensable partner, one whom we not only believe can do more in the war on terror, but whom we believe is already demonstrating its commitment to doing more, not only because it is essential to our security, but because they recognize it is essential to their own. Pakistan has already increased its military personnel and assets in the FATA region and must now use these assets to take more effective action against extremists taking refuge there.

There are currently 100,000 Pakistani forces stationed on the rough terrain near the Afghanistan border, and more than 600 members of Pakistan's security forces have sacrificed their lives in support of anti-terror efforts, more than 100 of them in the last few weeks alone. Pakistani security operations in the tribal areas are disrupting terrorist activities in an area where terrorists previously felt secure.

In many of its operations against militants, Pakistani troops are using equipment and training provided by the United States. This assistance has been crucial to bolstering Pakistan's anti-terrorism capabilities, and by extension, our own. The State Department remains committed to working closely with the Department of Defense, with our Pakistani counterparts, and with Congress to ensure that Pakistani security forces have the necessary training and equipment to conduct these operations appropriately and effectively. I am aware of the substantial amount of foreign assistance—both economic and security—that we provide Pakistan, and assure you that we will work to see that these valuable resources the American people provide to Pakistan are utilized efficiently and effectively.

President Musharraf shares with the United States a recognition that we cannot counter terrorism and other forms of violent extremism by military means alone. Our mutual goal is to drain the swamp by creating an environment inhospitable to terrorists and extremists. That can be done only by bringing governance into ungoverned areas while persuading the local people that the benefits of governance are greatly preferable to the false hope offered by extremist recruiters. Musharraf's plans for the most vulnerable areas of Pakistan include not only security operations to combat terrorists but assistance and development to provide for basic human services, health, education, economic opportunity and local governance that provides for civilian security for those that support the government's efforts. His plan cannot succeed without a modicum of security and the support of local tribal leaders, and Musharraf has tried a number of methods to enlist their cooperation, including several agreements and undertakings with various tribal groups. For the most part these agreements were poorly implemented and enforced and failed to produce the results sought by the Government.

Before these arrangements existed, the Pakistani Government had tried deploying regular Pakistani military forces to these areas, but found that this antagonized local tribal leaders at the same time they pressed Taliban and Al Qaeda. The Government then tried a strategy of working with the tribes to fight extremists in the area. This strategy had limited success not only because the tribes failed to stop the extremists but because those who did cooperate with the government were sometimes murdered by extremists. One unfortunate indicator of the insurgents' desperation to maintain their hold is their willingness to kill tribal leaders to intimidate the local population. It is worth pointing out that the tribes in these areas have been victims more than supporters of the extremists. While the government has re-inserted some forces into the tribal areas, long-term denial of these areas to terrorists will require the eventual support and cooperation of the local population. We think that in President Musharraf's three-pronged security, governance and development strategy the Government has finally found the right approach in the FATA and we and the international community should support it.

U.S. development assistance in Pakistan is tailored to help build sustainable growth and improve living standards that will promote the conditions for good governance, responsible citizenship, and foreign investment. In 2006, the United States spent more than \$100 million to help Pakistan upgrade primary and higher education. Our emphasis is on improving the quality and affordability of Pakistan's public schools and to permit parents of limited means to pursue educational opportunities for their children beyond religiously oriented madrassahs. Pakistan's efforts to improve education are showing results. In Punjab, Pakistan's largest province, free textbooks and stipends paid to female students have increased enrollment by more than two million students since 2001. In the Tribal Areas, enrollments have increased 38% since 2000 with female enrollment accounting for 27% of total enrollments. National female literacy rates in Pakistan have increased from 32% in 1998 to 40% in 2005.

An additional \$45.7 million in U.S. funding is aimed at improving maternal and newborn health services and the accessibility and availability of family planning products, prevent major infectious diseases and increase access to clean drinking water.

We are also working closely with our Pakistani and non-governmental partners on key issues such as furthering women's rights and legal protection for ethnic and religious minorities, and combating forced child labor and human trafficking. Women's health is a particular challenge in Pakistan, but we know that the rate of maternal mortality can be lowered significantly with properly trained rural health providers, and the U.S. Agency for International Development providing such training.

We continue to actively pursue our public diplomacy efforts inside Pakistan to ensure that we reach out to Pakistani citizens to share our own message, and help others understand American policies, views and values. Americans continue to be generous in their willingness to help and reach out to Pakistanis as demonstrated after the devastating 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, where the immediate and overwhelming support of the U.S. military and the donations of private Americans saved many lives and garnered the goodwill of the Pakistani people. Nothing could have been more effective in demonstrating American values and disseminating a message of friendship between our peoples.

We are working with the Pakistani and the Afghan governments to find ways to assist their efforts to stabilize the areas along their rugged border. The joint statement issued by President Musharraf and President Karzai in Ankara this spring demonstrates growing cooperation between the two countries. But it is obvious that tensions remain. U.S. and NATO policies must continue to foster expanded Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral dialogue, stronger economic and trade ties, and deeper cooperation between Pakistani and Afghan border security forces. With U.S. assistance, Pakistan is working to secure its border with Afghanistan to prevent the smuggling of arms, terrorists, and illegal drugs which are fueling the Taliban insurgency.

Pakistan's transformation into a moderate democracy and a prosperous and open nation where its people can thrive is vital to our own future and safety, as well as to the future prosperity and regional stability of South and Central Asia. I look forward to working with Congress toward this goal.

Bangladesh

Moving on to Bangladesh, we find a country in transition. In accordance with the Bangladeshi constitution, the outgoing government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia turned over the reins of government on October 28, 2006 to the newly appointed Caretaker Government, appointed by the President to conduct elections within 90 days. From the beginning the opposition accused the Caretaker Government of party favoritism, unfairness, and incompetence. The former opposition party leader Sheikh Hasina called for massive demonstrations against the government that turned bloody and ultimately promised to boycott the elections if her many demands were not met. Our encouragement of a dialogue or compromise between the two main parties fell on deaf ears.

On January 11, 2007, on what appeared to be the eve of one-sided, violent elections, the President, at the urging of senior military officials, declared a state of emergency, indefinitely postponed elections, dismissed the Caretaker Government, and replaced it with a non-partisan group of advisers drawn mostly from the private sector—all actions permitted under the Bangladesh constitution. The new Caretaker Government immediately took measures, such as replacing the Election Commission and preparing a new and more accurate voter list, which had been key opposition demands. Some civil liberties were suspended, and a massive anti-corruption campaign swept dozens of senior politicians, businessmen, and government officials into custody. Six months later the state of emergency remains and some civil liberties have still not been restored, elections have not yet been held, and arrests remain 15 percent higher than last year. And yet independent polls reveal continued strong support for the Bangladesh government among Bangladeshis. The challenge for U.S. policy makers has been to forge a policy that accommodates the complex realities on the ground in Bangladesh—a country that was fast becoming a democracy in name only, where money, cronyism, and intimidation increasingly dictated the outcome of elections, the Parliament could not function, the electoral winners vanquished the losers, and the opposition's sole focus was on bringing down the government at any cost.

From the beginning, the new Caretaker Government stressed that it sought to restore, not replace, Bangladesh's democracy, by undertaking a comprehensive reform aimed at leading the country toward free, fair, and credible elections. The government insisted that it would not be rushed in this difficult task. Initially we were troubled that this dramatic shift in government might signal a hidden agenda to indefinitely delay a return to democracy and conceal a secret military coup. We articulated these concerns to the new Caretaker Government immediately, calling for a roadmap to elections to be announced as soon as possible and advocating a lifting of the ban on political activity. We also insisted that, while we applauded the anti-corruption effort, it would enjoy our continued support only if conducted with respect for international standards of human rights and with due regard for due process under the law of Bangladesh. Thus far the Caretaker Government has been open and responsive to our views, and has taken steps to address each of our concerns.

Bangladesh is a moderate and tolerant Muslim-majority country. While its democratic credentials have not always been perfect, it has held three elections since the restoration of democracy 16 years ago, and its people take pride in this achievement. On July 15, the Bangladesh Election Commission released a roadmap detailing the path to hold democratic elections by the end of December 2008. With international assistance, the Commission has already begun creating a new voter list with photographs—a huge step forward in a country where flawed and suspect voter lists have cast doubt on previous electoral outcomes. The Commission plans to start meeting with political parties to discuss electoral reform in September 2007 and will continue with electoral law reform by February 2008. Staggered local elections will begin in January 2008 with national elections scheduled by December 2008. We have commended the Caretaker Government on the release of this plan, but will continue to encourage them to honor this timeline.

The next step for Bangladesh to take is to lift the ban on political activities, which hampers the parties' ability to meet and introduce reforms. Since the Caretaker Government took power there has been a ban on political activity. At this point it is necessary for the government to lift the ban so that parties are able to meet legally to initiate internal reforms and prepare for the upcoming elections. We will continue to push the Caretaker Government to relax the ban on politics to allow Bangladesh's civil and political society to prepare for elections.

Part and parcel of electoral reform is political party reform, which I alluded to earlier. Until now, politics in Bangladesh has been dominated by Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League and Khaleda Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Both have served as Prime Minister and hold deep grievances against the other, poisoning the interaction between the two parties. They also resist any party reforms that will diminish their power. Reformers within each of the parties are pushing for fundamental changes in party leadership and structure and for internal party democracy. While this is a matter for the Bangladeshi people to decide, the United States is actively following these developments.

Mr. Chairman, you are no doubt also aware of the Caretaker Government's anti-corruption campaign. Bangladesh has the dubious distinction of consistently scoring among the most corrupt countries in the world according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption such as this is not a simple matter of lining one's pockets at the expense of wealthy corporations, or doing a few favors for a friend. Corruption of this nature eats away at the very tissue of society, resulting in justice denied to those too poor to bribe, deaths and injuries from illegal construction, mudslides due to illegal excavation, and poor basic services due to lax revenue collection. It is no coincidence, for example, that Bangladesh has a serious power generation deficit, and that many of the corruption allegations against high-profile figures involve power projects. As such, the strong actions the Caretaker Government has taken against corruption are popular with the average Bangladeshi and underlie the Caretaker Government's support among the people of Bangladesh. The government can point to achievements like moving swiftly to adopt the UN Convention Against Corruption, separating the lower courts from the executive branch, and streamlining the operations of Bangladesh's largest port, cutting transit times through the port from over eight days to three and trimming the rolls of no-show employees by 50 percent.

However, concern about the potential for over-zealous anti-corruption efforts yielding human rights abuses has resulted in a number of inquiries from NGOs, Congress and the press. Approximately 200 top political and business officials, from both major parties, have been arrested on corruption charges since January. In the first six months of 2007, approximately 286,000 people have been arrested, a figure 15 percent higher than during the same period last year. This number includes all arrests throughout the country, from charges of petty theft to murder, as well as the enforcement of long-standing arrest warrants that, for political purposes, were never acted upon. According to the government and human rights NGOs, the vast majority of those arrested have been released. The anti-corruption campaign has spared no one, regardless of rank; former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself was arrested on July 16 on extortion charges involving a power project when she was Prime Minister. She is being held in a special jail created for her in the residence of the Deputy Whip of Parliament, where she is allowed regular access to her lawyers and family. In a demonstration that Bangladesh has a system of checks and balances, the High Court ruled against the government, and in favor of Hasina, in a petition regarding one of her cases this week. We continue to monitor the case closely, and urge the government to ensure Hasina's rights are respected.

The United States supports, as always, efforts to combat corruption. The reforms being enacted by the government are necessary to restore integrity to government, impartiality and fairness to the criminal justice system, and to ensure the proper

funding of public programs from tax revenue. But it is also essential that the burden of corruption be removed from Bangladesh's economy to allow it to function properly, become more efficient in order to continue to grow and expand. However, we are carefully monitoring the campaign and seizing every opportunity to urge the Caretaker Government, both publicly and privately, to respect due process in every action of the anti-corruption campaign, to follow Bangladeshi law, and ensure that it upholds international standards of human rights. Detainees should be granted access to legal counsel and should not be held indefinitely without being charged. Although some have complained about the slow pace of individual cases, the courts have made a few convictions and more trials are on their way. We need to ensure, however, that the drive to rid Bangladesh of one evil must not substitute another and must not come at the expense of the basic rights and freedoms that are necessary for a stable, democratic future.

The Caretaker Government has not been without its missteps. Some of its initial actions toward journalists and detainees did not accord with the norms we would expect from a democratic country. Initially the government attempted to remove the leaders of the two largest political parties without due process. However, the government has since corrected several initial mistakes. Formal limitations and informal pressure on journalists has begun to ease and, despite concerns that the increased number of arrests would result in an increased number of custodial deaths, in fact there has been a significant drop in the number of deaths by law enforcement officials so far compared to the same period in 2006. We seek, however, even more than this; we are asking to see independent investigations of officers, whether civilian or military, who are involved in these abuses, and appropriate disciplinary action taken against those who have been found at fault. We will continue to monitor the human rights situation and, when appropriate, press the Caretaker Government to take the actions necessary to protect the rights of all during this critical time in Bangladesh's history.

Mr. Chairman, Bangladesh, a country where poverty is rampant, is also beginning to see further economic growth. The World Bank and IMF have noted that the Caretaker Government has carried out more reforms than previous governments have enacted in the last 10 years. GDP growth, at 6.7 percent for Fiscal Year 2007, was the strongest on record since Bangladesh's independence. Economic prospects are brightening. But problems remain. Increasing prices of basic staples such as rice and gasoline are pressuring the poor and electricity shortages hinder industrial growth. Many of the decisions taken by the government to improve order and conserve power, for example have courted dissatisfaction. Efforts to address chronic power shortages by curtailing the evening hours of shops has resulted in economic losses to shopkeepers and disrupted work schedules of those accustomed to shopping after work. Razing of slums constructed without legal work permits has displaced the poor. Strict import regulation and the elimination of small vendors have also contributed to rising costs of basic commodities. These are some of the continuing challenges facing the government. Bangladesh struggles to collect taxes and is facing growing inflation. However, I am confident that the current government, led by the former head of Bangladesh's central bank Fakhruddin Ahmed, will address these economic challenges through prudent reforms and completion of the anti-corruption campaign.

Bangladesh has also joined with us to combat terrorism. On August 17, 2005, the banned terrorist group Jamaatul-Mujahedin Bangladesh launched a nationwide campaign of intimidation by detonating nearly 500 small bombs across Bangladesh on a single day. The arrest of its top leadership in late 2005 and early 2006 under the Zia government led to a halt in terrorism, but a new spate of arrests in late 2006 and early 2007 indicated that extremists are regrouping with the intent of conducting new attacks. Upon taking office, the Caretaker Government identified counterterrorism as a top priority. Since then, Bangladesh has pursued extremists, cracking down on the Jamaatul-Mujahedin Bangladesh, sentencing and executing six convicted militants in March of this year. The United States will continue to cooperate with Bangladesh, helping it to strengthen control of its borders and land, sea, and air ports of entry. Further, we will provide, with the consent of the Congress, additional counterterrorism-related assistance in Fiscal Year 2009. This assistance is necessary to support Bangladesh in its quest to rid itself of further violent militants that may emerge from within the country or seek safe haven in its borders.

The situation in Bangladesh remains fluid and the Caretaker Government still must prove itself by adhering to the elections roadmap it has released, and by meeting each milestone and benchmark, culminating in free, fair, transparent, and fully participatory elections. It must continue to fight corruption while ensuring that the human rights of all its citizens are preserved and protected, while fostering the

growth of the very institutions that will make sustaining democracy possible, a vibrant civil society, a free press, and a fair and impartial judicial system. The United States will continue working with our longstanding partner as it moves through this important period in its history. Together we can strengthen a growing democracy, eliminate terrorism from Bangladesh, and provide brighter opportunities for Bangladesh's over 150 million citizens.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you both very much.

Mr. Gastright, it seems that the consensus view within the intelligence community is that al-Qaeda has largely restored its organization and its capabilities and has been able to do so because it found a safe haven within Pakistan, yet your statement paints a decidedly different portrait of a Pakistan that is actively and effectively combating terrorism.

How is it that al-Qaeda has flourished in a country that in your view is actively combating them?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The intelligence estimate that you were obviously referring to is the recently released National Intelligence estimate. I brought a copy of it here. It is entitled *The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. and the Homeland*.

The first judgment that the assessment makes is that terrorists are going to continue to try and attack us here in the United States. I think that is fairly obvious.

The second one that it assesses, and this is generally overlooked by those who are discussing the matter, is that, and I would like to quote:

"We assess that greatly increased worldwide counterterrorism efforts over the past 5 years have constrained the ability of al-Qaeda to attack the U.S. homeland again and have led terrorist groups to perceive the homeland as a harder target to strike than on 9-11."

The third bullet goes on to describe that terrorists remain active in their ability to recruit, train and the like and that they have found a safe haven in Pakistan's federally administered tribal area, as you suggested.

This does not, however, suggest that the Government of Pakistan is not fully committed in this fight. The Government of Pakistan is no friend of al-Qaeda, and certainly President Musharraf is no friend of al-Qaeda. In the last 4 years, al-Qaeda has made at least five attempts on his life, and no government has captured or killed more al-Qaeda or Taliban extremists than the Government of Pakistan.

Now, again, they recognize and have acknowledged that a safe haven has developed in a remote part of their country. This is a part of the country that has not been effectively governed since Alexander the Great was there, but they have developed a strategy entitled Pakistan's Strategy for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and it is a comprehensive counterterrorism, counterinsurgency strategy that the experts in the field—not me, but the best in the business—have described as the most comprehensive strategy the Government of Pakistan has ever embarked upon. We are supporting that strategy.

Mr. ACKERMAN. That area is where they are flourishing, right?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Sir, it doesn't say flourishing. It says that they have found the ability to operate in—

Mr. ACKERMAN. No, no. I am asking you. I am not asking what that said.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Again, sir——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is that the area where the terrorists are flourishing?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. It does not suggest that they are flourishing. It suggests that they found the ability to operate in that environment.

Mr. CHABOT. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Certainly.

Mr. CHABOT. Just one quick point. I hear this a lot about the Government of Pakistan has killed more of the terrorists than anybody else, but isn't that because that is where they are at?

I mean, they are in their country in the Northwest Territory up there, and I understand that there is difficulty in going up there because there are a lot of them and it is a lawless area and they suffer a lot of casualties when they try to go up there. I hear that all the time that they have killed more than anybody else, that is, because they are in their country. That is a lot of the criticism that we have about the government, their government, not sufficiently going after them.

Again, I know it is dangerous work and hard work, et cetera, but isn't that true, that that is where they are?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Clearly al-Qaeda has had the opportunity and ability to operate in that environment. They had a safe haven in Afghanistan for years which as a result of Operation Enduring Freedom we eliminated it.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I think the gentleman's point, which I believe is well-taken, is that while it is absolutely true that the New York City Police Department gives more tickets on the Long Island Expressway than any other country gives on the Long Island Expressway is absolutely true, it really doesn't mean much. If the administration is claiming bragging rights——

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Sir, it is not bragging rights. It is a statement of facts.

Mr. ACKERMAN [continuing]. On behalf of Pakistan because they are killing more terrorists because they have more terrorists, and I think that is the gentleman's point.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. But the suggestion is that they are not actively engaged in the fight, and the reality is that Pakistani soldiers are dying because of the fight, and al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorists are being killed because of this effort. Captured and killed. Excuse me.

Again, it does not diminish the fact that, as you suggested, they are there, but the alternative could be a situation such as Afghanistan where the government was actively hosting the terrorists and extremists. That is not the case with the Government of Pakistan.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I think I conceded in my opening statement that Musharraf is looking to have it both ways, that they are cooperating with us in the war against the al-Qaeda, but against our other enemy and their enemy, the Taliban, they seem to have taken a powder.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Again, the intelligence, and I am happy to have a detailed discussion on this in a classified setting, the intelligence suggests that they are especially recently taking aggressive actions against the Taliban as well.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Okay.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. In just the last month—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Without revealing any great national secrets—

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN [continuing]. I would concede that they are making efforts. The point is are they effective? Are those efforts successful?

The evidence is to the contrary, which has nothing to do with intelligence I would think. It seems obvious to most people even without the National Intelligence Report estimate that the Taliban has regrouped, and they are back as strong as they ever were.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I respectfully disagree, sir, that they are back and as strong as they ever were.

Mr. ACKERMAN. What degree of they are back and they are strong? Would you say 80 percent?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I couldn't assess their current capabilities, but it is a shadow of the government that controlled Afghanistan. Clearly it is a shadow.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Are they back more than 50 percent?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Again, sir, that is an assessment that I think would be better made by an intelligence expert, an intelligence analyst.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How do we and the American public gauge whether or not the effort is effective?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Against the Taliban or against al-Qaeda?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Against both, but specifically right now the Taliban.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Again, I think that the measure of success against the Taliban is whether or not the senior leadership has the ability to operate unhindered, whether or not they are being captured and killed. Again, the intelligence is clear.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I don't know that the standard that they should be allowed is that they have been successful in operating unhindered. Nobody is suggesting that they are out there in full public view with the concurrence of the government. That should not be our standard. That they are hindered in some way is the least of our expectations. After all this money and all this effort, it seems like the government has turned almost a blind eye. It is a wink and a nod.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. One of the assertions in your previous question was whether or not it is a question of will or capability, and I believe the Government of Pakistan has said help us with the capability, but don't question our will because we are ready to engage in this effort.

Mr. ACKERMAN. What happened to the deal that the government cut with the tribal leaders?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I think the government recognized it didn't work. It didn't work because the strategy that the Government of Pakistan has designed calls for a security component. It calls for a governance component. It calls for an economic development component.

The first component that they moved forward was this deal with the tribes, a governance agreement basically saying, listen, we are going to give you some autonomy to operate. We will pull our

troops out of your region if you adhere to certain principles, principles that we would agree with, by the way: No cross border, no Talibanization, respect the writ of the government. Those principles are fine.

What resulted was I think that the Government of Pakistan lived up to their side of the deal and the al-Qaeda and Taliban enemy did not. Now the Government of Pakistan has recently said obviously that is not going to work. We are going to have to do this a little differently. We are going to have to do it comprehensively.

As a result, we always used the figure of 85,000 troops. That is now 100,000 troops in the federally administered tribal areas, a resurgence of the stick, so to speak, in order to result in adherence to the principles.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And your assertion is that they are effective?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Our assertion is that they are taking actions as we speak.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Are they effective?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. They are taking actions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Are they effective?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. They are having effects. Now could we improve the effectiveness of the organization?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Perhaps you didn't understand my question. Are they effective? I am not sure I can fine-tune that any more.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. If I could just respond? If I could show you a graphic, a picture if you will.

This is a picture of the Pakistani army folks that we trained. This guy is as well-trained, as well-equipped as any soldier in the world. He is wearing full body armor. He has optical scanners. This is a weapon that——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Looking good.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. This is the Frontier Corpsman. This is a World War I kit that he is outfitted with.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is that the same?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The Pakistani Government has said help us get these guys who are local, who are indigenous. Help us get these guys up to standard so that those who are from the local community can be engaged in this effort. They are more likely to have support of the community. That is part of their comprehensive strategy. Help us get these guys so that we can be, the Government of Pakistan can be, more effective. We think that part of the strategy makes good sense.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is that working?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. This is a new development, and it is part of a new initiative that the Government of Pakistan has embarked upon this year to make that piece more effective.

Mr. ACKERMAN. There is an old expression that went something like you can dress them up, but you can't make them dance.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Again, we have just begun the process of working with the Frontier Corps and in fact the tribal levies, which are considered local law enforcement, and so there is no doubt that there is going to be——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is there an assessment that local law enforcement wants to be and can be effective?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The assessment is that the local law enforcement needs to be effective. Currently there are 6,000 tribal levies in the federally administered tribal areas. They assess they need about 20,000.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes, local law enforcement needs to be effective. Sending them bubble gum won't do it.

I am trying to find out how you make them, if you can make them. That they have to be, they should be, we want them to be, this is the prayer. This is the plan of prayer. Let us pray that they become more effective. That is not the question. How do we do it? How do they do it? Do they want to do it before we figure out if they can do it?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. We have a small program ongoing right now to train the tribal levies, to train them. Those programs are fully staffed and fully—

Mr. ACKERMAN. How many people?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The classes are full, so if the question is: Are they interested—

Mr. ACKERMAN. How many people are in those full classes?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I believe there are 500 in the class. It takes about 6 months to train a class of tribal levies.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And how many people do we have there training them?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I don't have that number. I will have to get it for you, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Chabot?

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of quick questions. Relative to Nepal and the Maoist movement there, Ambassador Mann, could you tell us what, if any, involvement there is or support from China that the Maoist movement has? What do we know about that, if anything, that you can disclose here?

Ambassador MANN. Thank you. Thank you very much. This is basically an indigenous movement that has arisen out of the difficulties in the countryside, the very bad social and economic conditions there.

I think, I mean, from our own analysis, we are not seeing that this is fueled by external sources. It sprung up in the mid 1990s. It has attained a certain degree of power in the countryside, especially through coercion, violence, through tactics like that. And I think, sir, that is a capsule description that I hope answers the question.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. So they haven't been supplied to our knowledge then as far as weapons or explosives or any of that from an outside source that we are aware of?

Ambassador MANN. Well, in that part of the world, borders are very leaky, and I can't give you a precise answer as to where the weapons come from, but it is also a very low-tech insurgency with some firearms but also simply sometimes with clubs and implements like that.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. And then shifting to Sri Lanka relative to the Tamil Tigers, where are they getting their support from, whatever they utilize in order to carry out their—

Ambassador MANN. Well, a lot of this comes from the Tamil diaspora worldwide, our understanding is, both voluntarily and through means of coercion that the Tigers use to get funding for their cause.

They have an extensive arms supply network. We know some of this. The United States carried out last year a series of arrests. The FBI conducted an investigation and conducted arrests that we hope went far to breaking up whatever network the Tigers had involving the United States and financial flows and weapons supply.

But it is an extensive network, and as you noted, Mr. Congressman, this insurgency has been going on for more than 25 years, and they have had ample time to build these networks.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Gastright, let me switch over to Pakistan at this point. I may have a different view from my colleague from New York, the chairman of the committee, on some things relative to Afghanistan, certainly a lot of things with respect to Iraq and other things.

I share some of the frustration relative to how successful President Musharraf has been toward going after al-Qaeda in the Northwest Territories. I may be somewhat more sympathetic to the extent I understand probably why they haven't been more effective and the balancing act that he has had.

Is it accurate that one of his principal problems is that if he is too aggressive after the elements up in that region of the country, the more terrorist-oriented elements up there, that he risks the stability of his government when it comes to perhaps inciting those who may be more sympathetic to those elements up there that he would like to get and we would like him to get?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, sir. I would simply add one other piece of this, and it goes back to your previous question, which is that is where they are. There was a policy in place for years. Islamization is what it was called in Pakistan. That policy and the legacy of the Jihad against the Soviet Union resulted in a large number of individuals having a predisposition to an extremist ideology.

There are a number of Pakistanis who have this sentiment, and when the army goes up and gets attacked and returns fire, most of the time those are Pakistani citizens that the army is attacking and returning fire on. No government wants to fight its population. No government wants to be in that position. I think that you are right.

Mr. CHABOT. Yes.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. That is a tight rope to walk.

Mr. CHABOT. And yet we of course believe—I assume this is still the belief of many people within the State Department and the Defense Department, et cetera—that Osama bin Laden in particular and those who are closest to him and al-Qaeda we believe are in that area out there. I mean, sometimes we think he perhaps is on the Afghan side, but in general, I think most of the thinking is he is still in that area. Is that correct?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, sir. I believe the last testimony by the National Intelligence director assessed as much.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. And again, I had mentioned in my opening statement about Senator Barack Obama's comment I believe yesterday about being more aggressive and going after them. I think

there has been some frustration. If we have our military engaged in that part of the world, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and the guy who was most responsible for September 11 happening is just across the border, why don't we just send our troops in there and go after him? I mean, that kind of sentiment is there.

What risk, if any, is there to the stability of Pakistan spreading our military involvement into another country if we took that type of action?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. First, sir, the federally administered tribal area is the size of New Jersey, so it is a fairly large-sized area. It has about 3.5 million people in it. It is obviously sovereign Pakistani territory. The Government of Pakistan has said let us address this within our own population.

The concern obviously is a bunch of Americans would have no greater information than the Government of Pakistan, and again, they are actively engaged in that area with 100,000 people, 100,000 troops. Again, it is a large area. It is extremely rugged, some of the most rugged terrain in the world.

Again, the sovereign Government of Pakistan has said this is something we want to address. We want to root this out. Their long-term strategy laid out in this plan talks about not just killing people, because that in the long term won't address the issue.

The long-term strategy ultimately decides the best way to do this is to produce an environment that is inhospitable to extremists, to create an environment where the extremists simply cannot operate, where the population determines it is in their interest to work with the sovereign government.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Thank you. Finally let me turn to Bangladesh now. One of my frustrations and I think many others that have followed this issue is the government in Bangladesh continuing to put off the elections. I thought it was the end of 2008 is what they were saying most recently, but then I heard that they are now perhaps saying 2009. Am I correct on 2009, or have I been misinformed on that?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Sir, I met with Ambassador Faruk Sobhan last week, the Special Envoy to Bangladesh, and he again reaffirmed that the roadmap to elections that the caretaker has recently laid out is on schedule.

They are working with the United Nations UNDP to get the pieces in place to make sure that they meet the deadline that they have proposed. I think it would be a tremendous setback for the government if they were to let that slide.

Mr. CHABOT. And by slide, you are talking about 2008?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, sir.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. My staff had something here saying it now looks like elections will be delayed until 2009. Prior to reading this from my staff, I had not heard that. I had heard 2008 was the outside date at this point. So you don't have any information on that either?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I don't have any information to that effect, sir.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I have not heard as much.

Mr. CHABOT. All right. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Ms. Jackson Lee?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. You always focus this committee on very timely issues, and I appreciate this hearing in particular. It seems that there is not a lacking of questions and concerns that the Secretaries I hope will be able to share. I have heard some of the questions, and I appreciate both of you and your service.

Let me acknowledge—I know the chairman has acknowledged—the members of the Mongolian Parliament that I understand are here. We welcome them, and we thank them for their presence.

We know that there are representatives from Bangladesh in the audience as well, and we certainly thank them for their interest. There may be others. Sri Lanka may be present as well. We thank them.

I particularly want to acknowledge a delegation that I think will be very constructive, a trade delegation and business delegation, members of business from Karachi, Pakistan, who are here in the audience who have been visiting and I believe are offering some very constructive insight to some of the issues that we have to address.

Let me first of all start with Sri Lanka. I know that our dear friend, Congressman Pallone, is otherwise attending to a need on the floor, but I want to raise a point that he has made in his testimony, that the military Government of Sri Lanka and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil have resumed a two-decade ethnic conflict where nearly 70,000 people have been killed since 1983.

I think there was a lull while the tsunami took place, and I went to Sri Lanka during that time. We thought that there was a hope that there might be a reconciliation. It seems as if that is not the case. Thousands of innocent civilians have been killed, and more continue to die in Sri Lanka as a result of the violence. Both sides have chosen a military approach to the detriment of civilian distress.

It appears the government and the alleged liberators are not interested in peace. I raise the question whether or not our Government has involved itself in any of the severe food shortages in the north and whether or not one of the points of Congressman Pallone's statement and the similar letter or statement from Congressman Danny Davis, and, Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that I may submit that statement into the record.

I am not sure whether you have this letter, a letter from Congressman Danny Davis.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Without objection.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you.

[The information referred to follows:]

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August 1, 2007

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee
2435 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Jackson-Lee:

I wanted to bring to your attention a concern from the Sri Lankan community in regards to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country. I am asking you to consider asking this question in conjunction with the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia hearing on the Political Crises in South Asia: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

The question is in regards to the humanitarian crisis in Jaffna. I have attached info from a NY Times article (as background) highlighting these concerns.

There are disturbing reports of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the North of Sri Lanka, where the Tamils live (ethnic minorities). About a year ago (last August), the Sri Lankan Government closed the only highway linking the North to the rest of the country. This has resulted in a severe shortage of food & medicine. There are also reports of malnutrition in the North. A recent New York Times article mentions a young mother not having breast milk to feed her four month old baby. "One mother, Sathyaseelan Thilaka, had been eating so little that she could no longer produce enough breast milk for her youngest child, a 4-month-old boy born in the camp for displaced persons at the church. Mrs. Thilaka, 39, said she had reared four children through this war. Never before had she been without milk. This morning, she sent the older children to school without breakfast. She had eaten nothing herself, and it was almost sundown."

Have the US Administration raised the issue of Sri Lankan Government action that resulted in severe food shortages in the North? Also, since the members of the Sri Lankan Security forces are almost exclusively from the majority Sinhalese ethnic group; what protections do the ethnic Tamil minority have under the Government?

Please feel free to contact me or Yul Edwards in my office at 225-5006 should you have any additional questions or concerns. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Danny K. Davis
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Ms. JACKSON LEE. It makes the point that it really is the civilian victims, whether they are with the government or whether they happen to be the Tamil minority, who are suffering. What leadership role has the United States taken, Mr. Secretary, Secretary Mann, on trying to bridge the schism that seems to be deep in Sri Lanka?

Ambassador MANN. Thank you very much, Madam Congresswoman. You have identified so many of the crucial issues in this conflict. It is a tragedy in humanitarian terms. It is a tragedy in political/socioeconomic terms.

The United States has been approaching this on a number of fronts. In terms of the humanitarian issues, we of course have pro-

vided a great deal of tsunami relief. We have an aid and assistance program, but one thing I would flag also is that we advocate very strongly with the government to facilitate the work of nongovernmental organizations because we do a lot as a government, but the NGOs are just critical and U.N. organizations as well are critical to providing that assistance in these specific areas that you're talking about. So we are very strong in pushing for their effective operation for the military forces in the region to allow them to operate to the fullest possible extent.

In terms of the peacemaking, it is a very difficult circumstance. We are one of the co-chairs, the formal body of the international community, that tries to promote a peace between the two sides in this conflict. We meet regularly with the co-chairs. We travel to Sri Lanka.

We push very hard, and I have done this in my own meetings with President Rajapaksa, and our leadership in the State Department has done this as well, our Ambassador, to convey the message that there is no lasting, stable solution that rests on military means. It has to be a negotiated settlement. So we have been pushing very hard on this.

If I could add one other part to this, it is critical that the government observe internationally recognized standards of human rights, of good governance in the area it controls. It has just taken fully the east, the eastern part of Sri Lanka, and in terms of peacemaking, in terms of winning the confidence of the peoples of the area, it is essential that the government reverse the decline, reverse the deterioration of human rights standards, bring an end to the disappearance and kidnappings and in short restore rule of law to the area.

So we hold no brief for the Tigers, which are a terrorist organization and under whose writ there is no rule of law in Tiger areas, but we have a very strong message for the government that it must govern effectively.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. And it must not punish the Tamil civilians, who are as much victims as those who are associated with the government.

I have a list of questions for Secretary Gastright, but, Secretary Mann, I do want to pursue it further maybe in a meeting. I am just thinking that we can do more with the United Nations. I don't want to take time to get an answer right now unless maybe later on you might have time to do so.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We will see if we can have time for a second round.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Right. I just want to go to Mr. Gastright to pose a question with him.

Mr. Gastright, you have two challenging areas there that I am concerned about. Let me quickly go because I want to make sure I speak to the issues of Bangladesh and Pakistan.

It is interesting that the right thing was done by the previous leadership resigning 90 days before the election was supposed to be held, but, lo and behold, we have a military-backed caretaker government currently in power in Bangladesh that will promptly lift or should lift the state of emergency and move toward holding free elections. We don't have that.

And so I think if we don't see movement, it is important for all to hear. Some of us may be pushing legislation that would make a statement by this Congress. We know the State Department is working, but I think it is important for a very strong statement to be made to Bangladesh and the caretaker government that we should have due process for the citizens, that we should focus on early elections—my colleague from Ohio mentioned that—so that no slippage goes into 2009. It should be early in 2008.

Certainly I think one of the strangest actions is not allowing political parties to meet. That is the very crux of democracy. So I would appreciate it if you would answer that.

I think you are taking notes. Let me get in my second question, Mr. Secretary, because this is crucial. I heard you give and I saw it looked like a PowerPoint. I don't know if we have it, but if it is not classified, I would certainly like to get a copy of it.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I think we should clearly establish that Pakistan is a valuable ally and has really by the people, Pakistani-Americans, and the general public, the predominance of the general public particularly in the cities are advocates and seek to be allies in many instances of the United States, but we have a seeming rising crisis. One thing I think we have not done is taken advantage and embraced business groups, civic groups in Pakistan who want to stand for a democratic Pakistan.

I indicated that there is a delegation traveling throughout the United States, and one of the things that they have offered as a suggestion is a reconstruction plan that I think is to be presented by the State Department in that region, and the region I am talking about of course is the area where the tribal leaders are.

It is crucial that that reconstruction project turn into constructive legislation but that the State Department is energetic behind defining that there are good people in Pakistan who are attempting to do the right thing.

Could you answer for me the fact that there are thousands of Pakistani troops on the border, that even though the agreements may not have been successful, they were with tribal leaders and not necessarily with the Taliban, that the focus was tribal leaders to sort of get them to unify against the terrorists and the value of Pakistan as an ally and the importance of reconstruction in the area to provide jobs? If you could go to Bangladesh and then that, I would appreciate it.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Thank you, ma'am. On the first question, Bangladesh, those were my talking points, obviously due process, a schedule for the elections, which they have put together, human rights.

I am informed that this caretaker government may actually and shortly develop an independent Bangladeshi human rights commission—I think that would be a step in the right direction—that protects the basic human rights of all of its citizens.

But indeed the mandate of the caretaker government is to establish the conditions for a free and fair election that all of the Bangladeshi people have an opportunity to take advantage of. That is what they need to be doing. They have in fact developed a plan

which has been evaluated by the United Nations and thus far are on schedule to meet that plan. I agree with you again, ma'am, that slippage on that would be of great concern.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Please let them know that legislation may be forthcoming if they are not moving as quickly as they should—

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. JACKSON LEE [continuing]. By some who are interested in that approach.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, ma'am. On the second issue of Pakistan, I too met with the Karachi Chamber of Commerce as they came through town this week, and I found that they had a number of very constructive ideas and excellent proposals, some of which we are already taking action on to elevate up to the highest levels.

With regard to the FATA strategy, this is a 9-year, \$2.5 billion effort that the Pakistanis outlined. They have asked the World Bank to evaluate the economic development piece of it. World Bank says if they will follow the plan, this will work.

They are putting their own resources into it. This year the Government of Pakistan set aside \$120 million for it. They have spent \$96 million in health, in education and infrastructure, all of the things that you have to do to make an area more viable.

We have come to the Congress and in a supplemental proposal asked for \$150 million for this year and each of the proceeding 5 years asked Congress to support that, to support the effort as well to make an area inhospitable to extremists, because the lion's share of people are not supportive of extremists. They want to have a decent life. They want to send their children to school.

As we establish girls' schools, they are fully staffed. They are fully attended. It is the story of walking uphill both ways. They really are. The girls are making—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. As you say this, are you convinced of this in that area that is so controversial that there are people there and that it is worth it that the United States pursues—

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE [continuing]. An alliance with Pakistan and that there is a desire to thwart the terrorists, to find Osama bin Laden, as opposed to being cohorts? Are there not Pakistani troops on the ground there, a substantial amount?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. One hundred thousand Pakistani troops and again a comprehensive strategy developed by the Government of Pakistan that the best in this business have decreed is the most comprehensive plan the Government of Pakistan has ever attempted to make an area inhospitable for extremism and terrorists.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I don't want to cover up finally to suggest that we don't know that there are serious problems there, but I think the State Department and I think the administration has to show that they are mindful of the challenges there. They are mindful that it is dangerous. They are mindful that terrorists are there.

They have to make a stronger point that while they are mindful of that that they are very much engaged so that Congress does not get a sense that we are covering up, that we are letting things get by, because I don't want that to be the perception.

At the same time, to give serious recognition to the bloodshed, loss of lives of Pakistani military, that there is a reconstruction economic program and that it may be salvageable, that area, if we are persistent and diligent in the war on terrorism, but that we continue the alliance with Pakistan. Is that the position? Am I capturing where we need to go?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. Absolutely. To fight this fight, you have got to bring all the tools to the table, and that includes jobs and education and social opportunity for women and children especially.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Crowley?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank you.

Mr. CROWLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for allowing me to sit in on this subcommittee hearing as well as a Member of the full committee. It is appropriate following my good friend and colleague, Ms. Jackson Lee, who shares an interest that I have in this region.

Mr. Gastright, I thank you as well as Ambassador Mann for your testimony today. Mr. Gastright, you and I have had an opportunity for a number of briefings particularly on Bangladesh, and I thank you for your availability both now but in the past as well and for your advice.

Let me just follow up on a couple of questions that Ms. Lee had broached to you in regards to Bangladesh, one which I don't think you answered, and that was pertaining to the political activity or the lack thereof of private political meetings that can take place within Bangladesh.

Before you answer that, I think it is safe to say that every Member of this House would have loved to have seen Bangladesh move forward more quickly on reducing the level of corruption within the Government of Bangladesh.

Corruption is relative. It is everywhere. It is here in the United States. It is not that we are free of corruption or other countries are free of corruption, but consistently Bangladesh found itself at the top of Transparency International's list of most corrupt countries for a number of years in a row.

I think I had a couple of conversations where I asked ambassadors and members of the Bangladesh Parliament can you move from 1 to maybe No. 5 or No. 7 so we can help show there is some progress here in terms of challenge accounts?

Be that as it may, there was no movement, which some would argue has led to the political unrest that has taken place within Bangladesh, other contributory factors as well, but it seems as though the intention here of this temporary government or caretaker government is to root out corruption within Bangladesh. At least that is what has been portrayed to me.

I thank Ms. Jackson Lee, Mr. Chabot, Mr. Ackerman as well, who has always maintained a deep interest in all things dealing with Bangladesh, as well as my colleague, Mr. King, who myself, Mr. Ackerman and Mr. King are co-chairs of the Bangladeshi Caucus, but we have real concerns here about what is happening in Bangladesh in light of the issues we have with the country.

There was some movement toward helping us apprehend some of the most wanted outlaws and terrorists within Bangladesh. Time

and again when we put the pressure to them, the Bangladeshis responded, whether it was on child labor, whether it was on trafficking of women, and most recently when the pressure was brought to bear to capture and find those responsible for terrorist activity within Bangladesh.

I am concerned about the breakdown of due process, of rule of law. The election process itself has been postponed until the end of next year. What is our Government doing to, one, ensure that those elections do take place? I understand it is probably not practical to have them take place earlier. What are we doing to ensure that happens?

Has there been any inquiry as to the safety of the two Begums, both Sheikh Hasina and former Prime Minister Zia? Have we inquired as to an exit strategy in terms of moving beyond the caretaker government into the regular election process and then regular order within government? Do we have an ambassador on the ground? If not, do we have one coming? Can you give us any insight as to that?

The arrest of 200,000 people that has been brought to my attention through the special emergency law, that over 200,000 people have been detained, most of whom have not been charged with anything, is our Government speaking out with regard to that?

I have thrown a lot at you. If you could give me something back at this point? I want to mention I did meet with Ambassador Sobhan, who was here yesterday. I know he has met with folks from State as well. You may have had a meeting with him as well. I had the opportunity yesterday to meet the new Ambassador from Bangladesh to the United States and am impressed. I have always been impressed with Ambassador Sobhan but am impressed with the new Ambassador as well.

Having said that, if you can shed some light? If you can go back to Ms. Lee's question about internal political activity as well?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Thank you, sir. The majority of those briefings end up being information sessions from me or information on activities within Bangladesh, is always startlingly accurate and many times it is you that was briefing me on what was happening.

On the case of political party activity, I apologize, Ms. Jackson Lee, for failing to mention that we too have called for lifting the political party ban. It is the logical next step, and our chargé just in the past couple days has reiterated that, which leads logically to what is up with our Ambassador. We are going through the process of identifying someone now. We currently have a very competent chargé d'affaires, and she is doing a wonderful job.

You asked about the corruption question, Transparency International's most corrupt country for I believe 5 years running. Unless they can get corruption under control, unless they would take real steps against corruption, many believe that that in fact was the greatest risk of losing Bangladesh to the extremists.

It has always been a moderate Islamic country. However, if they didn't have the ability to turn to their secular political parties, would they look elsewhere? In fact, in other cases, that is something that has occurred around the world.

They have taken some activities, some effective actions. They have infused some power into this anticorruption commission that

is conducting a number of cases. They have separated judiciary from the executive, something that you have been calling upon for a long time.

They have cleaned up the Chittagong Port. You and I talked about that a lot. They have shaved the amount of time it takes to turn something around by 50 percent already. The first thing they said is you are no longer allowed to just keep your stuff on the port complex and use that as your sales lot, so they have instituted demurrage. You would be surprised when people have to start paying to keep things there how quickly they get them off. The port is running much more effectively, so some positive steps there.

We have inquired on the safety of Sheikh Hasina. Specifically we have gone in and visited with her. She is currently housed in a building in the Parliament complex. It is a two-story house that is set aside for the deputy prime minister. It is air-conditioned. She has access to health care because she has some medical issues. She has access to her friends and family and her legal counsel and is being treated well according to the information that the Embassy provided me.

The arrest issues, the arrest of 286,000 people, you are right. That is how many people have been arrested in Bangladesh so far this year for everything from petty theft to murder. Our information is that 80,000 of those remain in custody today. The 286,000 figure is about 50 percent higher than it normally is, so more people have been arrested. Most of them are related immediately and/or charged with their cases as they come in.

The good news is deaths in custody are down, so a positive step forward there. Deaths by the Rapid Action Battalion—you and I have talked about this organization that had a bad track record on crossfires—are down by 16 percent, so there are some positive steps. Deaths caused by the military are up, but the evidence suggests because the military is now on the streets deployed. Again, overall the figure is down, so they are taking those matters seriously.

The right things for them to do? Create the conditions for elections, respect due process, human rights, create the conditions for the elections to take place. They have outlined a roadmap, and we expect them to adhere to that roadmap. That is what the international community has called on them to do.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Crowley. Thank you.

Ambassador Mann, in your statement, you discuss the need to push Maoists in Nepal away from the arms struggle, and yet your statement also notes that the Maoist leader, Pushpa Dahal, has stated publicly that the Maoists have no intention of joining the political mainstream. How do you push the Maoists into the political process?

Ambassador MANN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think there are two aspects to that. First of all, there needs to be a steady and sober political process for the Maoists to become a part of, so in that respect, we are helping the Government of Nepal, helping this party grouping pull together with the logistics, with the structure, with everything that will lead up to the November 22 constituent assembly elections.

The other part of it is to just say simply the laws have to be observed, and we strongly encourage the Government of Nepal, Prime Minister Koirala and his officials to have the home ministry forces, to have the police, to have the authorities mandate a strict observance of the laws of the country and the rules of the road.

We have not seen a lot of this happening, Mr. Chairman. This is a must for an effective political process in Nepal, so we can encourage. We can encourage. We can advise. We can support. In the end, there are certain things that must fall to the sovereign government of the country.

Mr. ACKERMAN. In your statement, you point out that the LTTE is one of the best-funded guerrilla groups in the world, receiving, as you say, an estimated \$200 million to \$300 million annually. Where does that money come from, and what steps has the administration taken to close it down?

Ambassador MANN. That money comes from the Tamil diaspora. I think like with most intelligence issues it is hard to get a handle on this. The Sri Lankan Government has given us information about what they know about this, but there are large Tamil diasporas in Europe, in Canada, in Southeast Asia, some Tamils in the United States.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Are they wealthy?

Ambassador MANN. I think it is a mix. Prosperous. There are many prosperous Tamils overseas.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How many Tamils would you say were in the diaspora?

Ambassador MANN. Gosh, you have stumped me on that, Mr. Chairman. I will have to get back to you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And they are all supportive of the terrorist organizations?

Ambassador MANN. I think not, and I think it is an important point.

Mr. ACKERMAN. What percentage would you say?

Ambassador MANN. I would just be throwing darts on that, but we know there is coercion in this, and it is important that we don't equate the Tamil Tigers with the leadership of the Tamil citizens.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How many Tamils are there?

Ambassador MANN. Sri Lanka is about 18 percent Tamil nationality and, what, it is about 29 million, 23 million, so just doing the math, roughly several million Tamils on the island. And then we have probably tens of millions of Tamils in Southern India in Tamil Nadu, so there are far more Tamils outside of Sri Lanka than there are in Sri Lanka.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Would you say there are 6 million Tamils in the diaspora outside of Sri Lanka?

Ambassador MANN. No. I would say there are tens of millions of Tamils in the diaspora if you count Southern India.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And would they be predisposed to supporting the guerrilla groups?

Ambassador MANN. I think not because after the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by the Tamil Tigers, I think that took the bloom off of the rose for a lot of the support that had existed in India for the Tigers.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So it would be a small number of very wealthy Tamils that were providing this \$200 million to \$300 million every year?

Ambassador MANN. My guesswork here, Mr. Chairman, and I am happy to sharpen this in a written response, is that it is more broad streams of funding, not coming from a few wealthy business people but from Tamil businesses, families on a global basis.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And the other part of the question? What are we doing to close down the money?

Ambassador MANN. Well, the FBI has gone after this very aggressively with investigations, and we have convened a group of like-minded countries, European, Asian, to exchange information on financial flows on this terrorist organization and to see what we can do as the international community to combat this. We can tell you we are proud, Mr. Chairman, that the United States has stepped up to the mark on this with actual arrests, prosecutions and investigations.

Mr. ACKERMAN. In what countries?

Ambassador MANN. Well, this is in the United States. Last year, U.S. District Court Brooklyn unsealed two complaints against eight defendants. There are also indictments in Baltimore against Tamil networks reaching into Singapore but also involving the United States in a shipment of weapons and funds.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How much in money, weapons and funds come from the United States?

Ambassador MANN. My estimate, Mr. Chairman, is that we are not one of the more important streams in the flow of money and funds, but when it crosses our borders and violates our laws, we act.

Mr. ACKERMAN. What is the dimension within the charges of those indictments in Brooklyn and the other places in the United States?

Ambassador MANN. Yes. In the Brooklyn indictments, four of the defendants were arrested with an attempted purchase from an undercover agent of SA-18 surface to air missiles, AK-47s and other weapons. The second complaint in this, multiple defendants were charged with fundraising, money laundering through U.S. bank accounts and front organizations.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How much money was involved in that?

Ambassador MANN. I will have to get back to you on that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Was it in the millions or hundreds of thousands? Do you know?

Ambassador MANN. I cannot. Sorry. I don't have the exact details here.

Mr. ACKERMAN. But this is small potatoes? I don't want to put words in your mouth. You said it was a small amount. The United States is not the hub of the activity?

Ambassador MANN. I think in our sense from the experts I have talked to, and again, it is very hard to nail down covert illegal activity, but our sense is that there is a lot of activity, let us say more activity, that comes out of Southeast Asia, perhaps out of Europe and Canada, than from the United States.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The bulk of the Tamils, the largest number, you seem to indicate is in India?

Ambassador MANN. Yes. Well, in the southern part of India is heavily Tamil.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Have we engaged India?

Ambassador MANN. Yes, we frequently talk with the Government of India about this.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And have they been cooperative?

Ambassador MANN. Yes. Again, certainly the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi has been a riveting, tragic event for India.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Right.

Ambassador MANN. So they are no fans of the Tamil Tigers.

Mr. ACKERMAN. It was riveting for all of us.

Ambassador MANN. Yes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. What is the dimension of the amount or the percentage of the \$200 million or \$300 million would you suspect comes from Southern India from the Tamils?

Ambassador MANN. I would not want to venture an uneducated estimate.

Mr. ACKERMAN. In our war against global terrorism and global terrorists, of which the LTTE is a part, we are trying to get a grip on how effective that war is going, and we would like to know if you could get us a written answer as to how much money has been intervened from the various countries from whence it might be coming, whether it be South Asia, the United States, Europe or Asia or anywhere else.

Ambassador MANN. I would be happy to do that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. On the Sri Lankan Government, you state that they are no longer willing to accept the 2002 ceasefire terms as demanded by the LTTE. Why is the earlier agreement no longer acceptable to the government?

Ambassador MANN. I think with the government's military push forward in the east, in effect, it has gone beyond the ceasefire terms which recognize that area as Tamil Tiger area, so that is one of the areas, one of the aspects of this.

Overall, Mr. Chairman, I think that what has happened is the ceasefire has crumbled at the edges, and then it accelerated from there over the past year and a half.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Gastright, we in the United States have been urging President General Musharraf to return Pakistan to democratic rule since he initially took power in 1999. Based on his performance in the 2002 elections and his recent attempt to remove the chief justice, why should we believe that this time things are going to be different? Is there any evidence that you can cite that would give us some confidence that the parliamentary elections are going to be free and fair and that the President General will take off his uniform and stand for election as a civilian and that he would do so after a new national assembly is elected?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The first question was what is the evidence that elections are moving on schedule, that we are going to have the elections, and I guess the best guide is—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, it was actually, what evidence do we have or why should we believe that they will be free and fair?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Well, the start is, are they going to happen? The Constitution says that they are going to happen this year. Presidential elections according to the Constitution would take place by the existing assemblies unless President Musharraf dissolves the assemblies before that, which is his responsibility as President, so he is responsible.

If he does not dissolve the assemblies, then they would take place between September 15 and October 15 by the sitting Parliament. He has stated as much. That is what the Constitution of Pakistan says. We are working with the election commission.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Do you have confidence that he is going to do the right thing?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I have confidence that he is moving toward elections in accordance with the Constitution of Pakistan, and again, the Constitution of Pakistan is what the Pakistani people need to have confidence in.

On your other question, the uniform, he said at the end of this year I am taking the uniform off. We have confidence that he is going to do that. Again, the Pakistani people will have an opportunity when they elect the Parliament in parliamentary elections, and I can leave this document.

Mr. ACKERMAN. In the past, he has dismissed the Parliament. He has dismissed the courts. He has dismissed the Constitution, changed the Constitution.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. His job as President is to dissolve the Parliament and call for elections. That is what the Constitution requires him to do.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Right.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Now, if the Parliament serves its full term, which we expect it to do, that would take it through November 15 and then sometime the beginning of next year, between then and the beginning of the next year, the elections for Parliament would take place.

Now, with regard to dismissing the court, he didn't dismiss the court. He referred the chief justice.

Mr. ACKERMAN. That was recently. Previously he originally dismissed the court.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I was referring to the most recent instance—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes.

Mr. GASTRIGHT [continuing]. Where he dismissed the chief justice.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes, he recently dismissed the chief justice, but previously he dismissed the entire court when he first came in.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I believe the last question you had was about—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, my first question was do we have confidence that he is going to do the right thing, or do you have confidence?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I have confidence that he is going to have elections in accordance with the Constitution of Pakistan.

Mr. ACKERMAN. On a scale of 1 to 10, the next time you appear before our committee, will you say it worked out the way you had hoped it worked out? What are the chances of that happening? Zero to 10.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I am confident that he is going to hold elections in accordance——

Mr. ACKERMAN. I heard that. I am looking for a number.

Mr. GASTRIGHT [continuing]. With the Constitution of Pakistan.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes, with the Constitution of Pakistan. From zero to 10.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. If the question is: Am I zero to 10 on the Constitution of Pakistan, will he adhere to that?, then it is a 10. I think he will adhere to the Constitution of Pakistan.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The question was if the question is asked the next time you appear, on a scale of 1 to 10, would you say that you were happy with the way it worked out?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I will be happy if he adheres to the Constitution of Pakistan.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And what number is that?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. That is a 10. If he adheres to the Constitution of Pakistan, then he has done what the people of Pakistan need him to do, and that is live up to the laws of their land. It is not our election. It is the people of Pakistan. It is their election, and they have to have confidence that that was free and fair and that they have a system and a process that they believe worked.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Did he cook the last election?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. In 2002?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I think that international observers generally considered that was not a free and fair election.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So are we going to have a free and fair election?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Again, the question is he says he is going to have a free and fair election.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Listen, I am asking just as an ordinary, everyday American. Let us strip ourselves of all the attitudes, and let us assume that neither of us is an apologist for General Musharraf or anybody else. Is he going to do the right and democratic thing that people who are democratic minded, whatever that means, are going to be happy with?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. He has said that is his goal, and I think that the people of Pakistan deserve that.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yea for the people of Pakistan. They deserve everything that they wish, every good wish, and we wish for them too. I am trying to find out your perspective or the administration's or somebody's perspective, not General Musharraf's perspective.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The administration expects him to hold a free, fair, credible election.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We want him to.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. This is the policy of prayer. It is our fervent prayer and deep desire and dream and hope.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. We are working very closely——

Mr. ACKERMAN. But do we think he is going to do it, and why do we think he is going to do it?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. We are working very closely with his election commission.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Has he met your expectations in the past?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. On?

Mr. ACKERMAN. On anything.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Absolutely.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Like what? Like free and fair elections?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Well, let us talk about capturing more al-Qaedas than any government on earth.

Mr. ACKERMAN. No. Let us talk about free and fair elections. Let us talk about free and fair elections.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. We are working intensively with the Government of Pakistan.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Has he met your expectations so far on free and fair elections in the past?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. We have asked him to establish an independent election commission.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Has he met your expectations?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. He is meeting the expectations of establishing a foundation for a stable democracy.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I know your message, but that is not my question.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The foundation of a sustainable democracy isn't the question? That has to be the question, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I get to ask the questions that have to be the questions for anybody here. You can evade them. You can fudge it. You can read your talking points again, but it is a simple question. If you don't want to answer it, then we get the message, but I just want to make sure you understand the question and are not accidentally just reading something.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I am not reading anything, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Okay. Has he met the administration's expectations so far as far as having free and fair elections?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I believe he is working with us.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If you can't answer that, I have no reason to believe anything you are trying to tell us.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Mr. Chairman, I am trying to tell you that he is working with us to establish the conditions for a free and fair election.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I am not asking what he is working on. I am just asking you retrospectively. It is easy to look over your shoulder and say the son of a gun hasn't done as good as we wanted. That is not hard.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Mr. Chairman, he is trying to establish the conditions—

Mr. ACKERMAN. We would like him to do better. That is not hard. If you keep saying we expect him to do better, we expect him to do something, I am just asking you.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. We expect him to establish the foundation. Part of that is having an independent election commissioner that can do his job. Part of that is having an electoral roll that the parties have confidence in. Right now we don't have confidence in that electoral roll.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is the administration afraid if we push him too hard toward doing things that are democratic that we expect of all governments that his government is going to fall? Is that why you are not answering? Is that your concern? That is the question.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Mr. Chairman, I have every confidence that he is going to hold elections in accordance with the Constitution of Pakistan, every confidence.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Which he can change, which he can dismiss, which he has changed and dismissed in the past.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. He is not changing the Constitution of Pakistan to hold the elections. He is adhering to it exactly, and he has laid out a timeline that says this is how I am going to do it.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is he going to give up his uniform?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. He has said he is going to take off his uniform at the end of the year.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Did he say that in the past and not do it?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Wow. Got an answer. Appreciate that. It is not that tough. I don't know why there is such resistance to confronting reality. I mean, I know you can't predict the future, but at least we can acknowledge what has happened in the past. If there is no reason to believe that he has changed or anybody has changed from what they have been in the past, why would the future be different? I am just trying to figure out where we are going, where we might be going, because we are spending a lot of money here.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. And I believe we are working intensively with him on the money that you authorized to prepare for those free and fair elections this year, and that is what that \$39 million that you authorized is going toward for elections.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Let me ask you a question about Bangladesh. Your statement notes, "The challenge for U.S. policymakers has been to forge a policy that accommodates the complex realities on the ground in Bangladesh," so read the statement. I take it that means the administration does not view takeover by the military-backed group of advisers as a military coup, which I think you said?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And therefore that coup-related sanctions on U.S. assistance are not applicable?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. That is correct, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is the government that is there now there because of the sufferance of the military?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. No, sir. The government is there now because the President at the time dismissed the caretaker government back in January and appointed a new caretaker government.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Was that action legal?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I am sorry, sir?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Was that legal?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. According to the attorneys at the State Department, that does not meet the standards of a coup. Again, that is in accordance with their Constitution.

They had a caretaker government, which is an unelected body that comes to power when the government of a country steps down. That is what their Constitution says, so this caretaker body was in.

Everybody believed that this particular caretaker government, the previous, was extremely partisan, was generating the conditions for an unfair election. On the eve of that election, the Presi-

dent of the country dismissed the sitting caretaker government and appointed this apolitical body.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And the caretaker government is a pawn of the military?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. We do not believe that. We do believe the military is backing this caretaker government, and I think that that is fairly public information. I know it is public information.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I suspect you are right. In your statement, you note that the steps taken by President Ahmed were all actions permitted under the Bangladeshi Constitution.

It is my understanding that the state of emergency declared cannot exceed 4 months without further parliamentary review. Since there is no Parliament to review the current state of emergency that has lasted beyond the 4 months, under what legal authority is the current Government of Bangladesh proceeding?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I will have to get back to you, sir. I will have to bring that information back to you, sir. I don't have it handy.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Do we believe it is proceeding under legal authority?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The information I have is that we believe the current caretaker government is a constitutional entity.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Proceeding under legal authority?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Yes, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. But we don't know under what theory?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The best information I have is that the Constitution of the country provides for a caretaker government and that this falls within that construct.

Mr. ACKERMAN. But I was correct in saying they have outlived their constitutionally approved life?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. I am not aware of that, sir. I will have to investigate, and I will get back with you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Crowley?

Mr. CROWLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me just follow on your question on Bangladesh. Again, thank you for the second round.

In the interest of fairness, you did respond initially to my question about the two Begums in relation to Sheikh Hasina but did not I don't believe mention former Prime Minister Zia in terms of her condition.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. My understanding is she is not currently under arrest. There are indictments, but she is not currently under arrest.

Mr. CROWLEY. Thank you for that. In relation to the scheduled elections, some have suggested that the attempt by the government to go for what is known as the Cadillac version of an election ID card, because they are going for the Cadillac, could bring problems that could help further delay or postpone these elections if they so choose to do so.

Can you comment on that? Has the State Department or has anyone here commented to the government about getting ID cards together but maybe not necessarily the Cadillac version so as to not create impediments for elections in the future?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. The plan that was the roadmap that the government put out called for a draft voter list, with photographs to be finished and publicly posted by June 2008.

The UNDP, which is working closely with the government, believes that that is achievable and therefore does not anticipate a slippage on that particular issue.

Mr. CROWLEY. But if it is not achieved theoretically?

Mr. GASTRIGHT. If it is not achieved?

Mr. CHABOT. Yes.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. In the hypothetical, again, our information is that that is completely achievable and in fact may actually be able to be achieved ahead of schedule, so we don't expect that particular timeline to not be met at all. We expect it to be achieved, and in fact there is a possibility of it being achieved in advance of June 2008. Again, that is those who are evaluating the plan.

Mr. CROWLEY. Thank you. Let me again thank Mr. Ackerman for his questioning as well, his line of questioning as it pertains to all the issues we have talked about but especially as it pertains to Bangladesh. These are questions that not only Mr. Ackerman but many of us have had and have expressed interest to the State Department about as well as directly with the present caretaker government within Bangladesh.

I have also talked to the government about exit strategy as they move beyond the present caretaker government into, as I mentioned earlier, a more normal state of affairs within Bangladesh, so thank you, and again, thank you, Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Crowley, for your long-term and abiding interest in the region and for sitting in with our subcommittee.

Let me thank both witnesses for your testimony, for your appearance before us. The issues that we have left open and yet unanswered, if you could get back to us in some kind of reasonable period of time, it would be greatly appreciated.

We look forward to seeing you again and speaking to you in other venues. Thank you both very much.

Ambassador MANN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GASTRIGHT. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:08 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE FRANK PALLONE, JR., A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Thank you, Chairman Ackerman for holding this very important hearing on the political crises in South Asia. I want to also thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before your Subcommittee today. As the founder and co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Sri Lanka, I have serious concerns regarding the worsening conflict in Sri Lanka.

As you know, the military of the Government of Sri Lanka and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have resumed a two-decade ethnic conflict in which nearly 70,000 people have been killed since 1983. Thousands of innocent civilians have been killed and more continue to die in Sri Lanka as a result of the violence. Both sides have chosen a military approach, to the detriment of civilian distress. It is clear that neither side is committed to peace.

Over the past 20 months, more than 1,000 people are believed to have “disappeared” and another 4,500 people have been killed. Last month’s murder of two volunteer aid workers by unidentified gunmen came ten months after the execution-style murder of 17 local staff members of the aid agency Action Contre la Faim. This was the worst attack against humanitarian workers in memory.

Three hundred thousand civilians have survived the violence, only to face months of constant displacement. Hundreds more have been detained under newly strengthened emergency regulations that give the government broad powers of arrest and detention without charge. Security forces have expelled hundreds of Tamils from Colombo. LTTE and the Karuna faction continue to engage in recruitment of children as combatants, extortion, abductions and assassinations.

Meanwhile, the government has established a new institution to investigate allegations of human rights abuses—the Presidential Commission of Inquiry. However, it has failed to reduce impunity human rights abuses. In fact, its credibility and effectiveness has been challenged by the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons.

As the war grows more vicious, there is a pressing need for a more concerted effort by the international community to pressure both sides to stop fighting and bring them back to the negotiating table. The recent violence has not crossed the boundary into genocide or war crimes. But we must not wait for these atrocities to occur before we act.

While the Group of Eight has attempted to mediate the conflict in the past, a recent report by the International Crisis Group has described the international response to Sri Lanka’s human rights problems as “disjointed, lackluster and tardy.” Instead there should be an international role in human rights monitoring in the ground. This support should not be seen as invasive but as an effective way to help the state protect its citizen’s rights. There should also be a strengthened crackdown on LTTE fundraising, arms procurement and coercive control of Tamil civilians outside Sri Lanka.

If America is going to live up to the standards we set for ourselves and continue to lead the world in affirming human rights everywhere, we need to facilitate a renewed international effort in Sri Lanka. We must maintain political engagement through high-level contacts and visits, including a visit by Members of Congress that could be sponsored as a CODEL through the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. Chairman, I have introduced a resolution that supports an increase in U.S efforts to the region. It also strongly urges a resumption of peace talks by all parties immediately. There is no military solution to this conflict. The LTTE must denounce terrorism as a means to its political aspirations. Over 25 years of terrorism has not

improved the lives of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. All efforts must be focused on restoring and sustaining peace and all pertinent parties must return to the negotiation process.

It is my hope that following this hearing, my resolution can be a basis for further examining the conflict, and possibly the vehicle used for final legislation that allows this Congress to go on record supporting further U.S. involvement in Sri Lanka.

The United States has a strategic interest in promoting peace in Sri Lanka and throughout South Asia. It is time we take some oversight on the crises occurring in Sri Lanka. We have an obligation to work toward achieving a lasting peace and U.S. diplomatic engagement is a necessary step toward this goal. Without it, there are plenty of reasons to fear that things can get much worse.

Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening today's hearing on this important issue. South Asia remains critical to U.S. global interests, and it is a region that is currently in the midst of significant upheaval. Today's hearing is both critical and timely. May I also thank the Ranking Member, and welcome our three distinguished witnesses: the Honorable Frank Pallone, Member of Congress; the Honorable Steven R. Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State; and Mr. John A. Gastright, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. I look forward to your informative testimony.

Mr. Chairman, Pakistan has been one of our most important allies in the war on terror, but it is currently experiencing significant political turmoil. Its commitment to stamping out the persistent threat of terrorism within its borders has been costly both in terms of lives and resources. According to the United States Department of State, Pakistan currently has 85,000 troops stationed along the border with Afghanistan. Supported by the United States, Pakistan has invested significant effort and resources into securing the northwest tribal areas. Richard A. Boucher, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, recently noted that Pakistan has "captured more al-Qaeda than any country in the world, and lost more people doing that." Pakistani authorities have also killed or captured several top Taliban commanders in the northwest tribal areas in recent months.

Despite this ongoing commitment to the war on terror, just last week the Bush administration stated that it was unwilling to rule out the use of unilateral force to quell terrorist violence in Pakistan. This announcement came after a draft National Intelligence Estimate reportedly noted that al-Qaeda is rebuilding its command structure along the Pakistani-Afghan border.

Mr. Chairman, Pakistan has proven an extremely valuable ally in the United States-led war on terror, and I believe that such unilateral military action would be extremely detrimental to the United States, Pakistan, and the entire South Asian region. Instead, I strongly advocate continued concerted collaboration and dialogue with President Musharraf and the people of Pakistan. As a founding Co-Chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, I am wholeheartedly committed to the political, economic, and social amelioration of Pakistan for the Pakistani people and the ascendancy of Pakistan in the international community.

Despite my firm belief in the importance of ongoing conversation and collaboration with our Pakistani allies, I do not believe that this support should keep us from directing our close scrutiny on Pakistan and its government where such concern is due. In recent months, a judicial and political crisis erupted following President Musharraf's March 9th dismissal of Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, a move that many critics have charged was made to quash objection to his continued tenure as both President and Army Chief. Analysts have indicated that the Supreme Court's July 20th unanimous decision to clear Chaudhry of all charges was a major political defeat to Musharraf.

Additionally, since January of this year radical Islamists have been engaged in a rebellion of sorts in Islamabad. This campaign came to a head in early July, with a ten-day siege by Pakistani commandos against radicals holed up inside the city's famed Red Mosque. Though the government made efforts to negotiate with the mosque's clerics, these made little progress, and were viewed by many citizens as an appeasement of the Islamists. Instead, the Islamist radicals within the mosque were defeated after a 20-hour battle, in which over 100 people were killed, including approximately 10 security troops, 60 militants, and an unknown numbers of civil-

ians. Just last week, a bombing at the same mosque left 13 people dead and over 50 injured.

A final issue that continues to plague our good relations with Pakistan is that of upcoming elections. With national elections expected before February 2008 and President Musharraf's five-year term ending this year, questions have been raised about the constitutionally-mandated transition of power. Key among these controversies remains Musharraf's ongoing role as both president and army chief. Additionally, serious allegations have been levied against the credibility of the Pakistan Election Commission (PEC). These include charges that tens of millions of citizens, particularly women, are being denied voting rights. If Pakistan is to have transparent and credible elections, these concerns must be acknowledged and investigated.

Mr. Chairman, Pakistan is one of our most valued allies, and I believe that it is important to continue to support their significant efforts in the war on terrorism. However, I do not believe the Pakistani government should be given a "free pass" on these concerns of democratic governance and human rights. I continue to advocate ongoing discussion and collaboration with the government of President Musharraf, and I strongly urge the United States to hold off discussions and plans to use military force against Pakistan.

Though Pakistan may currently garner the most attention, several other nations in the region are also undergoing significant political upheaval. Key among these is Bangladesh, where emergency rule was declared by President Iajuddin Ahmed following opposition protests during the run-up to the January 2007 elections. This military-backed caretaker government, currently headed by Fakhruddin Ahmed, is expected to continue to hold power through 2008, though some observers have estimated that elections will not actually take place until 2009 or later.

It is my sincere hope that the military-backed caretaker government currently in power in Bangladesh will promptly lift the State of Emergency and move expeditiously toward holding free and fair elections. It would also be my expectation that the caretaker government will abide by internationally recognized standards of human rights and due process in its activities. I am personally concerned by reported events in Bangladesh, including the ban on political and union activity; the restrictions on free movement, free assembly, free association, free speech and a free press; and the denial of bail and other due process rights to more than 200,000 jailed individuals, according to some accounts.

Mr. Chairman, Bangladesh has long been a valued ally of the United States, and a key Muslim democracy in a region where adherence to democratic principles is at a premium. Only yesterday, I met with Mr. Don Haque, nephew of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. After listening to his concerns and insights, it is my hope that Bangladesh will move swiftly toward regaining its status as a thriving, emerging democracy and set an example for its neighbors and the rest of the world.

Both Sri Lanka and Nepal have also experienced significant recent upheaval. Since 1983, Sri Lanka has been locked in a separatist war between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This ethnically driven conflict has cost over 70,000 lives, and violence levels have surged since 2006. Attempts to revive negotiations have met with little success. The LTTE, in particular, has been responsible for numerous human rights violations, particularly the recruitment of children and the abduction of adults.

I urge continued U.S. efforts to encourage a political system that allows full political participation for all communities. Both sides to the conflict must be strongly encouraged to cease fighting and the start negotiating. I condemn all human rights violations, by both the rebel groups and by government troops, particularly those committed against children. We must continue to advocate for the protection of human rights and accountability for perpetrators, even as we seek long-term peace and stability for Sri Lanka.

Finally, in recent years, Nepal has been treading the treacherous path to democracy while fighting off a Maoist insurgency that has claimed over 13,000 lives since 1996. Since the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006, and the inclusion of the Maoists into the government in early 2007, the Maoist threat has diminished, while new ethnic tensions have moved to the forefront of national concerns. Nepal is currently ruled by a coalition government of seven key political parties, formed in April 2007, and elections are now anticipated in November 2007. However, a poor security situation, which has hindered voter registration, and significant unrest in the Terai region, remain significant obstacles to new elections.

Mr. Chairman, I believe in the promise of South Asia. I believe that these states, particularly Pakistan, are valuable U.S. allies. I also firmly support the rights of the people in these countries, for the men, women, and children of Pakistan, Ban-

gladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. I look forward to hearing the informative testimony of our distinguished panelists.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.

